

JOHN CALVIN'S CONCEPTION OF  
THE SEAT OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

by

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TO  
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## Preface.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate Calvin's conception of the seat of authority in Religion. The first two introductory chapters stress the need for some clear statement on authority in the Reformation Church and show where Calvin found that authority. The following chapters deal with his attitude to it. The general question of how far this or any other authority can be acknowledged in the religious sphere falls outside the scope of this thesis and has received only incidental treatment. The main concern has been with the dogmatic formulations in which Calvin establishes his authority, and with his general works to see whether he has been able to maintain a consistent position. An endeavour has also been made to determine whether, in his conception of authority, he has remained true to the religious insights of the early Reformation.

Throughout this thesis the quotations of the Institutes in English are generally from Allen's translation, but occasionally from Beveridge's when the sense of the Latin has been more clearly expressed in it. Quotations of other works are from the volumes published by the Calvin Translation Society. These English translations have occasionally been slightly amended. The quotations in Latin are from Tholuck's edition of the Institutio and from the volumes of Calvin's works contained in the Corpus Reformatorum.



I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Very Reverend Professor John Baillie and the Reverend Professor J.H.S.Burleigh, whose helpful and considerate guidance has been greatly appreciated, to Professor Emil Brunner who, in the early stages of this work, gave me some most useful suggestions, and to my wife who, at all times, has given me great help and encouragement.

CHAPTER I.

The disruption of Mediaeval culture as necessitating the establishment of some authority.

When John Calvin stepped into the field of European history and by his tireless efforts and remarkable power of grasping and emphasising essentials was able to consolidate the gains which had been made in the development of religious thought, the general revolt from ecclesiastical tyranny of the Middle Ages had been in progress for many years. The seeds of revolution had been sown over two centuries before. Dante, by reason of his overwhelming love of the Empire, had set the stage for the rising autonomy of the secular power; Occam, though holding a strong ecclesiastical positivism, by driving a firm wedge between the spheres of faith and reason, had sundered the mediaeval synthesis and inaugurated a movement of thought which was destined to have far reaching results; and Meister Eckhart, by expressing the mystic belief in the identity of God and man in bold formulations, gave man a sense of the value of his own innate religious dispositions and led him to break through the barriers of ecclesiastical authority. Thus the beginning of the fourteenth century had seen the emancipation of the national state from Papal dominion, of intellect from authority, and of emotion from dogmatic formulas. As early as this the stage had

been set for a great encounter which was to revolutionize religion, thought, and society, and completely to change the structure of European civilization.

Although these men still stood under the sheltering canopy of mediaeval culture their eyes were directed along a road which was to lead their followers out of the shadows into the stimulating brightness of human freedom with its joys of progress and fulfillment, but also with its danger and its tragedy. For freedom has no meaning when it exists in vacuo. Freedom can only be "freedom from" or "freedom for"; and it must always be from or for something specific. Freedom from the bonds of an existing regime can carry man a certain way; but it always implies a negative element, a sense that the desire to destroy will eventually reach a point where its immediate goal is achieved and the force, which was once so dynamic, will spend itself in frustration and futility. If there is not also the positive element expressed by "freedom for", if at the point where the destructive element has led to its immediate goal there follows no constructive drive to some higher and more permanent goal, nothing of lasting value will have been achieved. The negative element in freedom if it exists alone will eventually spend itself in chaos, anarchy, and libertinism. It is to Calvin's great credit that he saw the tragedy that was imminent in the new movement of the

age; and by establishing an authority which would check the debacle when the enemy was beginning to make strenuous efforts to reconquer he sought to bring stability and order to the movement and to cement those gains which might otherwise have been lost into the structure of European life and culture.

In the realm of thought and culture Petrarch and the Latin Humanists of the fourteenth century, by bringing the dead Antique to life, caused an upsurge of thought which dispensed with the prevailing authorities of the Middle Ages. Cosimo dei Medici led Humanism back from Latin to Greek antiquity, and from his famous academy new learning and art spread throughout Europe opening up new realms of thought and bringing freedom from the narrow limits of mediaeval scholasticism. The Renaissance rediscovered Nature and Man. Man rejoiced in his power to mould the material of nature by his own hand, to investigate the writings and practices of the past, and from his point of vantage to condemn, discuss, and reform. The free development of the individual was substituted for the monastic way of life, the free exercise of reason for the mediaeval system of authority. The searchlight of criticism was directed on institutions, systems, and doctrines; the Scriptures were investigated as human documents; the Papal claims and the dogmatic spirit of the dying age were subjected to historic criticism. In some of its followers the Humanism nurtured a desire for reform of



the Church and the world; but in others it produced a licence of thought and life which threatened to submerge Christianity itself as well as the Church under a wave of scepticism. With the destruction of acknowledged authority came the dissolution of morals; cheating, lying, robbing, violence, luxury, debauchery, and villainy became common. Man became his own authority and moral chaos was the result. The secularized Church had no power to resist and was carried away with the currents of the time.

Individualism, the new fact of the age, soon made its influence felt in the realm of religion. In the fourteenth century Wiclif led a dissenting movement and the reforming spirit of Hus separated itself from the Catholic tradition. Both of these were united with social and national movements and were suppressed by the secular and religious power. That the individual religious conscience was ever ready to ally itself with social uprising is seen from the developments of the sixteenth century; but prior to this it received little encouragement. Thus the new individualistic emphasis was forced to express itself in the less obvious channels of mysticism. Here the emphasis was on personal communion with God to the extent of rejecting the means of grace, on the personal reading of the Scriptures, and on the free movement of the Spirit both in and apart from the Scriptures. Such an approach must have given great

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consolation to many religious spirits of the late Middle Ages when ecclesiastical power was swift to repress opposition and when the unreformed Church seemed to have no true salvation to offer. Movements such as the "Friends of God" and "The Brethren of the Common Life" gave opportunity for realizing personal religious experience without coming into open conflict with papal power. MacKinnon describes the "Friends of God" thus:

Characteristic of them was an intense piety; devotion to the ascetic, contemplative life; insistence on experimentalism as the all-important thing in religion; a proneness to visions, apocalyptic fancies, hallucinations, and a rather morbid religious sentimentalism, frequently expressing itself in ecstasy and delighting in sensuous imagery without relaxing a pure morality; excessive introspection which lends a certain egoistic colouring to their piety, and, in seeking to transcend the limits of religious knowledge, neglects or underrates the more solid knowledge of God by way of rational reflection.<sup>1</sup>

Yet such an individual approach is to live upon a knife edge. So easily can the cultivation of the personal relationship with God become the essential and all-absorbing goal of life that humanity itself can be denied as the almost insane activities of Suso indicate; so easily can the denial of ecclesiastical authority and the trust in the free movement of the Spirit lead to the denial of any authority and the obliterating of the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, as is shown by some of the activities of the "Brethren of the Free Spirit"<sup>2</sup>; so easily can liberty without any recognized authority become libertinism and licence that it is not surprising that, in the tensions of the



age, this actually occurred.

This extreme religious individualism remained, in general, in its mystical cloisters until the time of the Reformation; but with Luther's revolt against the Papacy, in the general confusion of the time, it began to flourish with amazing rapidity. The Anabaptists who first appeared in Switzerland about 1522-1523 embraced many and varied points of view; but they all held to the belief "that revelation did not cease with the completion of the New Testament, but that day by day the word of God is revealed to man, that the divine revelation is vouchsafed to every individual, and that it is the only guide to be followed in the conduct of life"<sup>3</sup> Some of them held that all learning was unnecessary, disapproved of recourse to law, refused to take oaths, and condemned the possession of private property. This was a programme of revolution and it is not surprising that rulers everywhere were bent upon its destruction.

No doubt many of these men were most sincere, but there were some who were merely opportunists and others who, intoxicated by the new wine of liberty, were carried<sup>4</sup> to ridiculous extremes. Hulme points to Hofman who sowed the seeds of revolution, to Mathys, the self declared Enoch of the new regime, to Jan of Leyden, "a licentious rogue, a cruel fanatic, audacious, skilful, and brave", and to some of the followers of David Joris who abandoned themselves to fanatical excesses,

especially sexual indulgence. There was no creed, no doctrine which was regarded as authoritative, no central direction in this movement. Individuality had completely broken through the fetters of authority and tradition. The worst side of this movement received its fullest and most tragic expression in the excesses of Munster in the years immediately preceeding 1535, the years in which Calvin was preparing his Institutes.

With the passing of the Middle Ages, also, movements for social reform began to assert themselves. The new spirit of liberty and humanism as well as the slight amelioration of their lot brought a class consciousness and self-assertiveness to the peasants which was inevitably leading to revolt. The economic revolution, especially in Germany, had freed the town from the dominion of the feudal lord; but with prosperity in some quarters it had also brought extremes of poverty in others and had sown deep discontent among the masses. Hatred in the country of the dominating power of the feudal lord, hatred in the towns of the avarice of the new and powerful class of merchant burghers, hatred everywhere of the exorbitant demands of the feudalized ecclesiastical hierarchy, produced a spirit of revolt which was ever threatening to break forth with destructive violence. It was an age of rampant vagabondage and widespread lawlessness, an age of swindling and bribery, an age of plunder and murder,

when the irresponsible use of force was widely practised. Add to this the new spirit of liberty, the uncertainty of existing authority and the consequent relaxation of control, and it is not surprising to find that the call to revolution received immediate and eager response.

The ease with which the new religious spirit could be united with a movement for social reform and the extent to which fanatical religious and social revolutionaries could go had been shown in the Taborite revolt in Bohemia in the fourteenth century. In Germany, in 1502 and 1512, the general unrest of the peasant class had expressed itself in violence; and the publication of Luther's "Liberty of a Christian Man" was received<sup>ei</sup> as the trumpet call for new endeavours in which religious and social reformers would unite in destroying oppression. It was impossible for Luther to limit his reformation to the field defined by his own religious experience. Revolt against the spiritual power of the Pope inevitably meant revolt against his temporal power, which, in the unrest of the age, could without difficulty be extended to revolt against any and all authority. In 1524 the storm broke; "a social revolution based on the Bible"<sup>5</sup>. Although at first sympathetic towards the rebels in so far as their unbearable repression demanded redress, Luther, soon horrified by the excesses to which they ran, turned to the established authority of the nobility and consigned the peasants to the deepest



recess of Hell. "Dear Lords,"he urged,"smite,stab,destroy  
 ----. Whoever dies fighting for authority is a martyr  
 before God. --- I pray everyone to depart from the  
 peasants as from the devil himself."<sup>6</sup>

The Reformation was born in an age of extremists. In the realm of thought and morals,of religious development, of society and state,the passing of the restrictive authority of the Middle Ages had left the new Renaissance man completely unfettered. Everyone became his own authority. It was in his power to formulate his own philosophy of life and code of living;it was in his power to establish his own religious doctrines;and it was in his power to form and act upon his own idea of society,be he prince or be he pauper. Was the new reforming movement to find its home with the extremists of the age and become vitiated and lost in a whirl of freethinking and immorality,of vague and unprincipled spiritualism,and in social chaos and anarchy? Were the reins of power to be handed over to every wandering tinker who wished to formulate some new doctrine,to every Anabaptist who claimed to have received a fuller revelation of the Spirit? Were the sacred doctrines of the new faith to become equated with the articles of the peasants'reforming statements and be united with them in their destruction?

When Calvin moved on to the field it was time for immediate and decisive action. Already the forces which

were to lead the counter attack were gathering; already in his own land of France the action of certain extremist reformers had driven the religiously almost indifferent king back to the unreformed fold and resulted in an outbreak of reaction. Were the peasant rising in Germany and the excesses of Munster to be taken as typical and essential features of Reformation development, and must King Francis take immediate steps to destroy the pestilence before it could begin its reign of terror; or was it possible that the characteristics of the new movement were not to be summed up under categories of anarchy, immorality and chaos? Where was the authority which could marshal the forces which had rejoiced in destruction and lead them on to a programme of construction? The hour of the negative movement in the establishment of liberty had passed; now was the hour for a positive restatement of the position and the establishment of an authority which would be able to consolidate the gains, to resist attack, and to lead the advance with renewed vigour.

Calvin was the man of the hour. In setting up Scripture as the standard of authority he was doing no more than the duty of a leader of the Reformation. But in presenting the implications of that statement in a rational form he defined the nature and extent of the field that had been won; in revealing that the extremists had gone beyond the limits of true Reformation action he rallied those moderate men who had grown tired of

of excesses in an age of chaos; in declaring that liberated man was still a man under an authority which had definite practical implications for life and society he directed Reformation man on his way with a plan of campaign in his hand; and in stating the motives and defining the limits he consolidated the position and obstructed the counter attack which was about to follow.

His task however was not easy. The Reformation had no clear cut authority inherent in its charter of liberty. The Scriptures had been questioned both with regard to their canon and text and with regard to their interpretation; and the Church had been challenged openly. The individual, with his belief in salvation by "faith alone", felt little need to submit to the fetters of traditional authority. The Spirit alone brought conviction and produced the fruit of salvation. There is no doubt that among more moderate men there was a certain although ill-defined authority granted to Scripture and the Church; but among the extremists, whose excesses had stained the Reformation's name, this recognition was negligible. Two courses were open to Calvin. The one was carefully to assess and patiently to restate in clear terms the Reformation position as held by moderate men and trust that the Reformation principles themselves would command assent by their own truth. The other was to seek to impose a system of authority which



had some connection with Reformation principles and which would be strong enough to resist attack from without and to limit extremist activities within. As this thesis progresses we shall see which course Calvin followed. It is certain that he was eminently successful in bringing stability to the Protestant cause, and his example was carefully copied in various countries. Calvin towers over the Reformation scene and Calvinism has been a strong religious movement during the following centuries. This fact causes us to pause before acclaiming Calvin as the complete theologian of the Reformation. He not only defined the Reformation position; he also brought an end to its development. In his "History of Interpretation" Farrar describes the post-Reformation period as "very cheerless".

It was a period in which liberty was exchanged for bondage; universal principles for beggarly elements; truth for dogmatism; independence for tradition; religion for system. A living reverence for Scripture was superseded by a dead theory of inspiration. Genial orthodoxy gave place to iron uniformity, and living thought to controversial dialectics. 7.

It may well be asked whether Calvin in saving the Reformation principles from destruction in extremist hands did not at the same time shackle them to an alien system; whether in consolidating the position against attack he did not also restrict the Reformation spirit in such a way that it lost its characteristic power.

Calvin is a strange figure standing at a turning of



the way. He summons Reformation man from his somewhat disorganised but, for all that, interesting and instructive wanderings, gives him a plan and directs him forward. But the road which appeared so interesting turns out to be but a barren waste. In the life of the Reformation Church there was certainly a need for some recognised authority. But to establish authority in a movement which has lived on freedom is a difficult undertaking. The inconsistencies which, as we shall see, stand out so clearly in Calvin's writings suggest that the authority which he sought to establish was not fully in keeping with the spirit of the Reformation, and help to explain how he stood, at the end of a period of amazing development, a gigantic figure looking forward to an ~~and~~ uninteresting and in many ways retrogressive era.

CHAPTER II.The General and the Special Revelation of God.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate Calvin's attitude to the different forms of God's revelation to man in order to determine what authority he ascribed to them. It is a fundamental premiss of Calvin's thought that man is brought to a knowledge of God and thus becomes a religious man only through God's action in revealing himself. Such is the nature of God and man that there is no possibility of a relation being established between them unless God wills to present himself to man. Calvin, in common with the other Reformers and in agreement with the general ecclesiastical and theological tradition, held the distinction between a general and a special revelation of God. The former is given in creation and in God's providential dealing with the world, the latter in definite historical acts recorded in the Scriptures.

The General Revelation.

Religion in Calvin's view is no unnatural thing for man, for the human mind possesses instinctively some knowledge of a deity. Proof of this is deduced from the practice of idolatry, from the prevalence of superstition, and from the endeavours of the wicked to extricate themselves from the fear of God. This universal sense of

religion derives from the fact that God reveals himself to man in his works. "On all his works he hath inscribed his glory in characters so clear,unequivocal,and striking,that the most illiterate and stupid cannot<sup>2</sup> exculpate themselves by the plea of ignorance".In the earth upon which he stands,in the heavens which he views, in the animals and the flowers,and in the benefits which he enjoys,man experiences the infinity of divine power<sup>3</sup>.There is nothing so obscure and contemptible that it does not bear some mark of the power and wisdom of God<sup>4</sup>.

History too is a field in which God reveals himself to man. This providential dealing with the world is<sup>5</sup> the "second species of his works" .

For he so regulates his providence in the government of human society that,while he exhibits his benignity and beneficence to all in innumerable ways,he likewise declares by evident and daily indication his clemency to the pious and his severity to the wicked and the ungodly. 6.

Fortune and chance are"words of the heathen",for God is the governor of all things who has established his<sup>7</sup> decrees from eternity and executes what he has decreed. Calvin declares that the hand of God is to be seen in the overthrow of the impious,the comfort of the depressed,the raising of the poor and desperate,and that his wisdom is to be observed at work "in ordering every dispensation at the best possible time,-- and finally disposing all things according to the dictates of the

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~~the state of the~~ highest reason" .

This emphasis on the general revelation of God is no mere afterthought in Calvin's theology. It is not to be ignored or explained away; for it is basic to his whole theological outlook. If this aspect of his teaching be omitted then his emphasis on the universal sinfulness of man becomes meaningless. It is only in <sup>the</sup> establishment of the doctrine that there is a possibility of man's coming to a knowledge of God through this general revelation and also a possibility of him <sup>s</sup> rejecting this revelation, that the universal corruption and sinfulness can be treated seriously. The importance which Calvin actually attached to this doctrine can be seen from a consideration of the Geneva Catechism of 1545. In this he was concerned with presenting only the most fundamental elements of the faith and this particular doctrine is explained carefully <sup>9</sup> .

Yet Calvin will allow no power to this general revelation which he describes so vividly. Although God's majesty, power, and kindness are so clearly displayed man is so degenerate that he is unable to see and understand. From the wonders of nature he turns to idolatry and superstition; and in the movement of history he sees only that all things are controlled by the uncertain caprice of fortune. This applies to all men; for Calvin asserts that he is not speaking of the vulgar, "whose madness and profanity of the divine truth <sup>10</sup> has known no bounds", but of the excellent of mankind .



Man stands under the sign of Adam. All would have been well if "Adam had retained his innocence"<sup>11</sup>. This "si integer stetisset Adam" is the point of reference to which this whole section on revelation must be related.<sup>12</sup> With Adam's fall the imago dei was defaced. "It was so corrupted that whatever remains is but a horrible deformity"<sup>13</sup>. As far as the true knowledge of God is concerned it is practically useless.

Thus we see that Calvin's use of the idea of a general revelation always stands in a hypothetical context. He holds the possibility of a "natural" knowledge of God in principle; but it is not a possibility which he will allow to become a reality. With regard to current discussions concerning theologia naturalis and theologia revelata and concerning the analogia entis and the analogia fidei Calvin's theoretical position would appear to be definite. In principle it should be possible to develop a theologia naturalis and to come to a full knowledge of God by means of the analogia entis, - thus Calvin when he cites Exodus 34:6 as containing all that it is possible to know concerning God adds, "yet it contains nothing but what may be known from a contemplation of the creatures",<sup>13</sup> - but in practice this is not at all possible. Man can come to a knowledge of God by means of the analogia fidei alone. It should be noted however that these terms have to some degree changed their meaning since the

sixteenth century. To Calvin the analogia fidei would not have meant what it means to Barth:-"the correspondence of the thing known with the knowing, of the object with the thought, of the Word of God with the word of man in thought and speech"<sup>14</sup>. It was rather a rule for the interpretation of Scripture<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, when these terms are used with their current meaning,- analogia fidei for the way whereby man apprehends the revelation of God by faith, analogia entis for the means whereby he apprehends the general revelation by the exercise of reason, if this is admitted to be possible, theologia revelata for the theology formulated from the former, and theologia naturalis for that derived from the latter, it is legitimate to ask what Calvin's position is with regard to them. It should also be remembered that the early Reformers did not develop a systematic doctrine of revelation. The main controversy concerned the question of grace. Calvin was the first to develop an explicit doctrine of the knowledge of God; but in its analysis of the forms of revelation and the way in which these are apprehended this did not differ greatly from the generally accepted Roman Catholic position. There are certain important points at which Calvin's doctrine differed from that which would then be considered orthodox but, in general, there is no sharp division on the question of the relative positions of faith and reason in the apprehension of the revelation of God.

With regard to this question Calvin stood in the general line of thought which had come down from William of Occam and Duns Scotus who had sundered the realms of faith and reason. This line predominated both in Roman Catholic and Protestant circles, for the Thomistic synthesis had not yet been restored to its dominant position in Roman Catholicism. Therefore at this point Calvin was not on polemical ground.

In general Calvin's position is that the revelation of God which is given in creation and providence is an objective revelation which is there to be seen and understood by man, but that because of the Fall he is unable either to see or understand. Therefore we may say that in general Calvin dispensed with the analogia entis and held that a theologia naturalis was an impossibility.

Nevertheless two factors cause us to pause before declaring that this is his final position. The first is the fact that from time to time he does admit that natural man is able to come to some knowledge of God and that this knowledge is not completely false. From the natural manifestation of God which is "engraven upon the heart" and from the power which is visible in the natural world man is able to deduce that God exists, that his power is eternal, that his being is divine, and posit other attributes which follow from these. He can understand that God must be worshipped



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with his whole being. Thus the Gentiles, although they have received no special revelation, are yet "by no means destitute of the knowledge of what is right and just";<sup>18</sup> for they have "the natural light of righteousness". This natural knowledge of God leads to the establishment of religion and morality.

All the Gentiles alike instituted religious rites, they made laws to punish adultery, theft, and murder, they commended good faith in bargains and contracts. They have thus indeed proved, that God ought to be worshipped, that adultery, and theft, and murder are evils, that honesty is commendable. It is not our purpose to inquire what sort of a God they imagined him to be, or how many gods they devised; it is enough to know that they thought that there is a God, and that honour and worship are due unto him. 19.

Some men have advanced more than others in the understanding of the God revealed in nature, by the use of their natural reason.

There are some, indeed, even among the philosophers who make God to be the master builder of the world in such a manner as to ascribe to him intelligence in framing this work. 20

In this they are right. Paul, in quoting Aratus, uses a confession of that knowledge of God which is naturally engraven on men's minds; and it is right for him to do so "because men are by nature imbued with some knowledge and draw principles from that fountain"<sup>21</sup>.

This recognition of the power of natural man to come to some knowledge of God through the revelation given in nature means that Calvin, in practice, does not dispense completely with the analogia entis and that he

did not reject completely the practical possibility of a theologia naturalis . He frequently hastens to add, because of his theological position, that this knowledge is shadowy and transient, that it leads men to vanity<sup>22</sup> and doubt, and that none of the philosophers can finally exculpate themselves from revolting from God by corruption of his truth"<sup>23</sup>. Nevertheless the respect which he often shows to the writings of non-Christian philosophers is not fully in keeping with his theological position.

Whenever, therefore, we meet with heathen writers, let us learn from the light of truth which is admirably displayed in their works, that the human mind, fallen as it is and corrupted from its integrity, is yet invested and adorned by God with excellent talents. 24.

The second factor which causes us to pause is the way in which Calvin writes concerning the natural world and the revelation of God given therein. It is relevant to enquire if all the finely written statements which Calvin produced concerning the wonders of nature and the providential guiding of history are written merely to prove that all men are "without excuse". It is obvious that this is not so. What Calvin wrote in these passages was not solely or primarily theoretical statements which would place all men in the position of sinners. They were intended as a stimulus and an aid to faith. Calvin himself was able to burst forth into rapture over the wonders of God's creation;

and he directs his fellow travellers on the road of faith to seek their creator there. Has the analogia entis some further value? Calvin obviously uses it in relation with the analogia fidei. Inspired by faith man can understand the full revelation of God in his works. Although a man without faith does not<sup>t</sup> see fully the revelation of God in nature, nature is still a mirror in which God may be seen. The reflections, or the analogies, are not created by faith. They are there before faith. Faithless eyes see only distorted pictures and confused analogies; but to eyes of faith the reflections of God's person can be clearly seen<sup>25.</sup> and they are to be sought.

How closely these two types of analogy are connected in practice by Calvin is seen from his explanation of the way the spiritual truth presented in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is apprehended. As bread and wine are absolutely necessary for the life of the body so we see that the blood and body of Christ are necessary for the life of the soul. Thus "by the corporeal objects which are presented in the sacraments we are conducted by a kind of analogy to those which are spiritual"<sup>26</sup>. Calvin was willing to employ the analogia entis in close harmony with the analogia fidei. In this respect we are reminded of Professor Baillie's statement of the value of the analogia entis.



What is true in the doctrine of the analogia entis is that the knowledge of God does not precede our knowledge of man in time but is given 'in, with, and under' such knowledge, and that therefore no one of God's attributes is ever given to us save in conjunction with - that is, in comparison with and in contrast to - some corresponding attribute of man. 27.

Although Calvin's position is rather vacillating when examined by these tools which we are accustomed to use at the present time yet we can reach some conclusion for the problem which is being investigated in this thesis. The natural world, although an objective revelation, is recognized as such by man only in a vague and shadowy way. By itself it cannot lead man far in his knowledge of God. Related to God's special revelation however it is of definite importance. Therefore in our investigation of Calvin's conception of the seat of authority in religion we must turn to his attitude to this special revelation.

#### The Special Revelation.

Without doubt it is God's special revelation given in specific acts in history and displayed openly in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ that Calvin regards as authoritative in religion. This revelation is the Word of God addressed to man in his fallen state and has been recorded in the Holy Scriptures. It differs fundamentally from the revelation given in nature, not in its content which is actually the same, but in its form. Whereas the natural revelation is given in such a form that although it should be possible for man to

come to a full knowledge of God it is in fact impossible, the special revelation is given and attested in such a way that it is certainly possible for man to be brought to a knowledge of his Creator. Calvin declares that

We have need of another and better assistance properly to direct us to the Creator of the world. Therefore he hath not unnecessarily added the light of his word to make himself known unto salvation. 28.

This was the assistance by which the patriarchs "attained to that familiar knowledge which distinguished them from unbelievers" for it gave authority to the self-manifestation of the Creator in his works. By this they were persuaded that the information they received came forth from God. "For God always secured to his word an undoubted credit superior to all human opinion". 29.

Since this revelation has been recorded in Scripture it is to it that man must now turn if he would profit from the revelation of the Word.

For, as persons who are old, or whose eyes are by any means become dim, if you show them the most beautiful book, though they perceive something written, can scarcely read two words together, yet, by the assistance of spectacles, will begin to read distinctly, - so the Scripture, collecting in our minds the otherwise confused notions of Deity, dispels the darkness, and gives us a clear view of the true God. 30.

Calvin uses this metaphor twice in the Institutes and it has been claimed to be a bad metaphor. Parker holds that

He most certainly did not mean that man suffers merely from dimness of sight, or from cataract, and needs spectacles to help him to see clearly what he already sees mistily. His whole theological aim and work repudiates that decisively. 31.

Yet, regarding one side of Calvin's teaching, we can say that this is precisely what he does mean. He is sure that all men can form and actually do form some notions of the Deity by reflection upon the things of nature; but these notions are invariably distorted because of man's inability to see clearly. The special revelation does not dispense with the general revelation but gives man standards by which he can judge it and a new point of view from which he can interpret its meaning. It may be that Calvin's "theological aim" was to repudiate the claim that man can come to a knowledge of God through the revelation in nature, and in certain of his dogmatic statements this claim is openly condemned, but it is not an aim which is pursued consistently. Often in practice we observe Calvin introducing the repudiation only after it has been admitted that man can draw certain elementary conclusions about God from his works. In such cases the repudiation applies to the claim that man can come to a full knowledge of God through the contemplation of nature. Calvin's practical position would appear to be that man has some shadowy idea of God, that in the Scriptures he finds the attributes of God clearly and authoritatively delineated, and that as he recognizes these attributes in Scripture so he realizes that they are also to be found in nature. Calvin does not regard the special revelation as a "republication" of the revelation in nature. Actually



it has been given in the Word alongside the "common lessons of instruction"<sup>31</sup> since the earliest time. He does not attempt to differentiate between the knowledge gained from nature by the man of faith and the knowledge which he obtains from a correct understanding of the Scripture, for the two are essentially interwoven.

Nevertheless whatever value we conclude that Calvin sees in the revelation in nature it is certain that he would allow it little authority. It is in faith that he finds religious certainty, and faith is produced solely by God's special revelation. Faith for Calvin is the primary fact of religion on the human side. Pure and genuine religion

consists in faith, united with a serious fear of God, comprehending a voluntary reverence, and producing legitimate worship agreeable to the injunctions of the law. 32.

It is by true faith that the children of God are distinguished from unbelievers, that God is called upon as Father, that man is brought from death to life, and that he is sanctified when "Christ, our eternal life and salvation dwells in us"<sup>33</sup>.

The authorities for faith are Scripture and the Word of God. With regard to Scripture Calvin declares that "no one can have the least knowledge of true and sound religion without having been a"disciple of the Scripture"<sup>34</sup>; and with regard to the absolute importance

of the Word of God he states, "Take away the Word and  
<sup>35</sup>  
 there will be no faith left".

It is to the Scriptures and the Word of God that Calvin appeals continually throughout his extensive writings. These, bringing to man the special revelation by which he comes to a knowledge of God, are the authorities in religion for Calvin. It is with these two terms, Scripture and the Word of God, that this thesis is particularly concerned. We must determine what he included in Scripture and why he did so. We must ask how he regarded its authority as being established and whether he used Scripture in a way which was in keeping with his conception of their nature as an authority. Concerning the Word of God we must investigate Calvin's use of this concept and the nature of the authority he ascribed to it. This will involve a discussion of the relation between Scripture and the Word. Finally, since the Holy Spirit had been ascribed an important place in the general revolt against the authority of the Church of the Middle Ages, we must enquire what function Calvin ascribes to the Spirit in the establishment of authority in religion.

### CHAPTER III.

#### The Holy Scriptures.

##### A. The Canon of Scripture.

Although it is obvious to all that Calvin held the Scriptures in the highest honour, there is some doubt as to what books he actually included in the Canon. In the theological world of his time the content of the Canon was in a state of uncertainty. Luther had criticised it, men like Castellion were seeking to restrict it, and the Roman Church was about to expand it to include the Apocrypha. Therefore it would not have been surprising to have found Calvin adopting an unorthodox Canon. There were new critical tools at his disposal, a new critical spirit was in the air, and the Reformation principles of exegesis gave a new approach to the discussion of authenticity. Yet it is apparent, though there are some who disagree, that Calvin accepted the orthodox Canon.

The apocryphal writings were appreciated by Calvin and in his early work, Psychopannychia, it seems that he might have been willing to accept them as Scripture. Baruch is referred to as a prophet and the authors of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom as "sacred writers" whose works should be received, "if not as canonical", at least as those of "ancient and pious writers strongly supported". He also points out in his Preface to the Old

<sup>1</sup>Apocrypha  
 Testament/<sup>2</sup>that these writings contain "good and useful  
 doctrine". But if it was ever in his mind that the  
 apocryphal writings should be included in the Canon he  
 rejected the thought quite early. When he quotes from  
 these books in his Institutes, it is only as a means of  
 attacking the Papists on their own ground, and his  
 condemnation of the fourth session of the Council of  
 Trent shows clearly where he stands.<sup>3</sup> Although he still  
 declares that he "would not entirely disapprove of the  
 reading of these books",<sup>4</sup> he condemns those who, in  
 forming a catalogue of Scripture, "mark all the books  
 with the same chalk and insist on placing the Apocrypha  
 in the same rank with the others"<sup>5</sup>; and rejecting the  
 false doctrine which has been established from these  
 books, he takes his stand with the Fathers who would not  
 permit them to be used to establish doctrine.<sup>6</sup> Calvin  
 therefore excluded the Apocrypha.

There are some writers who claim that he also  
 rejected certain of those books which are contained in  
 the orthodox Canon. Pannier is struck by the fact that  
 not only did Calvin not comment on the Apocrypha, but<sup>7</sup>  
 has not even commented on all the canonical books. In  
 particular he points to the three books attributed to  
 Solomon, the two small epistles of John, and the Book of  
 Revelation, and claims that Calvin did not comment on  
 these for theological reasons and that he did not  
 include them in the Canon.<sup>8</sup> But it is important to note



that Calvin has never stated that he intended to produce commentaries on all the books which he regarded as canonical, and that his expositions do not follow any systematic scheme. The order of publication of the books seems to have been regulated by his desire to establish true doctrine and to aid those undergoing persecution, and the number produced seems to have been limited mainly by lack of time. The Epistle to the Romans, which opens a way "to the understanding of the whole of<sup>9</sup> Scripture", came first, and was followed by commentaries on those books in which false doctrine is attacked, - Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and the<sup>10</sup> Pastorals. Thus his first interest was to establish doctrine. Afterwards

he was mostly guided by the appropriateness of some book to meet a pressing current need of the Church - perhaps the danger of invasion by some new heresy or of perversion by an old error still clinging to it. For the inspiration and consolation of the French Protestants passing through the fires of persecution he turned to Daniel and Jeremiah.<sup>11</sup>

Doctrinal teaching before historical books; New Testament before Old; if there is any summary which can be laid down for Calvin's method of choice this must suffice. Thus it is precarious to base an argument for Calvin's attitude to the Canon merely on the fact that he failed to produce commentaries on certain books.

Pannier's doubts about Calvin's acceptance of the Song of Songs are seen to be ill-founded when

consideration is given to the action of Calvin and his fellow ministers at Geneva in connection with the case of Castellion; for they refused to admit him<sup>12</sup> to the ministry precisely because he would not accept this book as canonical. Furthermore Calvin quotes from the three books of Solomon as from Scripture.<sup>13</sup> That he failed to comment on or quote from the two small epistles of John is not surprising in view of their brevity and lack of doctrinal content; and that he speaks<sup>14</sup> of the first epistle as the "canonical" epistle of John gives little weight to the argument that he excluded the other two, in view of the current use of the word "canonical" with reference to the Catholic Epistles, and the fact that there is no direct evidence in his writings that he questioned their canonicity. The argument ex silentio is not at all conclusive. Then, with regard to the Book of Revelation, it is quite possible that he said in conversation that he did not<sup>16</sup> understand it, but this does not imply any doubt as to the canonicity of the book, although it may be one reason why he did not comment on it. That Calvin regarded the Apocalypse as Scripture is obvious from his frequent citation of it in the same way as and alongside other<sup>17</sup> canonical books; and Reuss' conclusion is sound, that

if there is no commentary, it is simply that the illustrious exegete, wiser in this respect than several of his contemporaries and many of his successors, understood that his vocation called him elsewhere. 18

Thus it can be agreed that Calvin accepted the Canon in its entirety. The important question is, On what authority did he accept it? To this question scholars have given various answers. Pannier finds the basic criterion in the inner testimony of the Spirit, Leipoldt in the authority of the Church, and Warfield in the test of historic and dogmatic criticism. That three such celebrated scholars can produce a case for their different views shows the variety of statements which Calvin makes in discussing canonicity. In his Institutes he undoubtedly declares that the sole criterion is the testimony of the Spirit; but in his Commentaries he appeals to the authority of the constant witness of the Church and applies comparative critical methods.

In the Institutes he utterly condemns those who hold that the decision as to what is canonical is in the hands of the Church.

For thus, with great contempt of the Holy Spirit, they inquire, Who can assure us that God is the author of them? Who can with certainty affirm, that they have been preserved safe and uncorrupted to the present age? Who can persuade us that this book ought to be received and that expunged from the sacred number, unless all these things can be regulated by the decisions of the Church? It depends, therefore, (say they) on the determination of the Church, to decide both what reverence is due to Scripture, and what books are to be comprised in its canon. Thus sacrilegious men, while they wish to introduce an unlimited tyranny, under the name of the Church, are totally unconcerned with what absurdities they embarrass themselves and

others, provided they can extort from the ignorant this one admission, that the church can do everything. 20.

Calvin declares that this type of reasoning makes the certainty of Scripture dependant on the will of the Church and the inviolable truth of God dependant on the arbitrary will of men. It is obvious that the corrupt Roman Church of his day is in his mind when he states that, if such is the authority of Scripture, then there is no solid assurance of eternal life, and that faith itself will be ridiculed because it rests precariously on the uncertain authority of human favour.<sup>21</sup> But it is impossible, he argues, for the Church to determine the Canon and to decide what writings are to be ascribed to the prophets and apostles; for it is on the very doctrine of these writings that the Church itself is founded.

For if the Christian Church has been from the beginning founded on the writings of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles, wherever that doctrine is found, the approbation of it has certainly preceded the formation of the Church; since without it the Church itself had never existed. 22.

Having thus dispensed with the authority of the Church, he proceeds to declare that the Scripture is its own authority, and that those books which are truly Scripture carry their own inherent proof of canonicity. This is perceived by men in the same intuitive way in which they distinguish light from darkness. The decision to accept a book as canonical is not a



decision that is made on the ordinary plane of human judgement, but is produced by the "secret testimony of the Spirit"<sup>23</sup>. This puts the whole discussion in an extremely personal context as is seen from the following words.

We seek not arguments or probabilities to support our judgement, but submit our judgements and understandings as to a thing concerning which it is impossible for us to judge; and that not like some persons, who are in the habit of embracing what they do not understand, which displeases them as soon as they examine it, but because we feel the firmest conviction that we hold an invincible truth;----- because we perceive the undoubted energies of the Divine power, by which we are attracted and inflamed to an understanding and voluntary obedience, but with a vigour and efficacy superior to the power of any human will or knowledge. 24.

But if, in the process of canonical authentication, there is included no activity which can be called human judgement in the usual sense, then it is also apparent that the man who accepts a certain book as canonical cannot explain why he does so in a way that will convince anyone who challenges him. If Calvin's sole authority for the acceptance of the books of Scripture were the testimony of the Holy Spirit, we would expect to find that, if he were to discuss canonicity at all in his Commentaries, he would say no more than the simple statement "I know". But this he does not do. Rather he discusses the attitude to the book in ecclesiastical history and examines its doctrinal content. For he realizes that any discussion of

canonicity in a particular case cannot be conducted on the elevated spiritual plane which he defines in his Institutes but must include those factors to which men can grant some authority. The discussion in his Commentaries is carried on on the rational plane and not on the supra-rational plane of the Spirit's testimony. Thus it is useless for Pannier to endeavour to show that Calvin applies "sa propre doctrine", the testimony of the Spirit, in discussing canonicity in his Commentaries. The high theoretical statement of the Institutes has no immediate relevance when it comes to the question of how men are to be shown that this or that book should be included in the Canon.

Although the Church cannot and must not make the certainty of the Canon depend upon her own will, there is a sense in which she reacts to the books of Scripture which is of definite practical importance.

When the Church receives it, and seals it with her suffrage, she does not authenticate a thing otherwise dubious or contravertible; but knowing it to be the truth of her God, performs a duty of piety by treating it with immediate veneration. 26.

Although Calvin does not enlarge on the authoritative nature of this activity of the Church in the Institutes, there is no doubt that he attaches great value to it when he discusses the canonicity of particular books. When he appeals to the consent of the Church he is not merely producing, as he claims Augustine does, "the universal judgement of the Church because it was very useful to his argument and gave him an advantage over

over his adversaries"<sup>27</sup>, but rather because there are  
 "very substantial reasons why the consent of the Church  
 should have its weight"<sup>28</sup>. Since, throughout the ages of  
 history, innumerable men have recognized certain books  
 to be the truth of God and treated them with veneration,  
 their agreement carries the tangible, if derivative,  
 authority of the Holy Spirit.

That Calvin uses the authority of the Church is seen  
 clearly in his rejection of the Apocrypha when his first  
 court of appeal is the "consent of the primitive Church"<sup>29</sup>.  
 Equally definite is the appeal in the condemnation of  
 Castellion, where it is seen that the authority of the  
 Church was sufficient to establish the canonicity of a  
 book if it should happen to be questioned. Castellion  
 is censured for levity in "treating as of no account  
 the constant witness of the universal Church"<sup>30</sup>, and  
 reminded that any doubtful books have already been  
 criticised during the centuries. The particular book  
 which he would reject has never been doubted; and he is  
 informed that his own judgement cannot stand against  
 such a weight of tradition. It is obvious then that, in  
 the case of books which have never been doubted, the  
 testimony of the Church is sufficient authority to  
 maintain them in the Canon, and there is no need to enter  
 a debate "as to what is and what is not worthy of the  
 Holy Spirit"<sup>31</sup>. This is also shown by the fact that the  
 only books whose canonicity Calvin investigates in the



Arguments of his commentaries are those which have been questioned during the history of the Church.<sup>32</sup> Thus the somewhat biased statement of Pannier, "deux fois seulement il rappelle la tradition des Eglises",<sup>33</sup> quoting the textual point of John's narrative of the woman taken in adultery and the argument of the commentary on Jude, carries no weight at all; for those books whose place in the Canon is discussed are precisely the ones for which the unequivocal acceptance of the Church cannot be quoted as an authority.

Where the continuous consent of the Church is lacking Calvin emphasises whatever agreement there has been among Christian men and shows that the content is in agreement with the doctrine of the apostles. Thus Jude is accepted on the grounds that "it contains nothing inconsistent with the purity of apostolic doctrine, and was received as authentic formerly by some of the best";<sup>34</sup> James is included because his doctrine is not contrary to that of free justification, because there is "nothing unworthy of an apostle of Christ", and because Calvin can see no just cause for rejecting it;<sup>35</sup> Hebrews, which received the acceptance of the Church late, is shown to excel in doctrine;<sup>36</sup> and the second Epistle of Peter, throughout which the "majesty of the Spirit of Christ appears",<sup>37</sup> and which "has nothing unworthy of Peter as it shows everywhere the power and grace of an apostolic spirit",<sup>38</sup> is accepted. It must be emphasised that this



last example is not an appeal to an individualistic criterion such as Castellion used, for the phrase is qualified by the words "according to the consent of all".<sup>39</sup> And the power, grace, and majesty of spirit that the epistle contains indicate that it has the same powerful, graceful, and majestic doctrine as is to be found in the other apostolic writings. That this is the meaning of the phrase is shown by Calvin's statement on the closing words of 2 Maccabees where the writer expresses a wish that he may have written well; "How very alien is this<sup>40</sup> acknowledgement from the majesty of the Holy Spirit", that is to say, from the constant example of Scripture as a whole.

The standard of doctrine applied to books whose historical acceptance has been uncertain is not that they should contain all doctrine, but that their doctrinal content should not conflict with the sum of doctrine contained in the books of undoubted authenticity. Thus James is seen to be "more sparing in proclaiming the grace of Christ than it behoved an apostle to be", but "it is not surely required of all to handle the same<sup>41</sup> arguments". The question of author in disputed cases does not trouble Calvin, for it is enough that the books have been accepted and agree with apostolic doctrine. Hebrews is a good example of Calvin's method and emphasis. In the past the author has been claimed to be Paul, Luke, Barnabas, or Clement; but Calvin contents

himself with showing that it is obviously not Pauline by reason of the historical circumstance, doctrine, style, and language, and stating that, "as to its author, we need not be solicitous".<sup>42</sup>

Did Calvin therefore accept the various books of the Canon because the Spirit prompted him to acknowledge each particular book,<sup>43</sup> or because he felt himself bound to the tradition of the universal Church,<sup>44</sup> or was his a critically mediated acceptance?<sup>45</sup> Certainly the Institutes would appear to grant authority only to the testimony of the Spirit; but this does not appear in such a dogmatic form in the Commentaries, where the basis is found in the consent of the Church and in comparison of doctrine.

Calvin is actually applying two distinct principles. The one is the Reformation principle of the testimony of the Spirit, and the other is the orthodox principle of the authority of the Church combined with a secondary principle of doctrinal comparison which is used to support the "consent of the faithful". Calvinist scholars have endeavoured to elevate one or other of these principles in order to free his thought of contradiction; for it is apparent that the two cannot be held to be equally and absolutely valid. Pannier, as has been shown, claims that the testimony of the Spirit is the definitive principle, and seeks to relegate the second principle to an extremely minor place; but his

reasoning has been shown to be biased, for he does not treat seriously Calvin's appeal to the "consent of all" which plays a predominant part in his practical consideration of the Canon. Other scholars, taking their stand upon Calvin's position in his Commentaries, so interpret the statement in the Institutes that it appears to have no reference to the Canon. Thus Davies concludes that,

when we consider that he never once says in all his discussion of the Spirit's testimony that it has the function of deciding what books are canonical, although he very often does say what its function is, and that when he discusses the canonicity of Biblical books he uses historico-critical arguments and never mentions the testimony of the Holy Spirit, we are entitled to maintain that the passage does not contain the inference suggested. 46.

While it is true that Calvin does not include any detailed discussion of the Canon in this chapter, yet it does not therefore follow that he was not including the Canon in his general consideration of the divine nature of Scripture. Davies suggests that Calvin, in introducing the question of canonicity at the beginning of this chapter, "may simply be piling on the 'cavils' of the Romanists without intending to answer them all at once".<sup>47</sup> Actually however Calvin is challenging only three assertions of the Romanists, namely, that the Church alone can assure us that the Scriptures are from God, that they have not been corrupted, and that these books comprise the Canon. And he repeats these in a condensed form when

he rejects their claim that the Church alone can "decide what reverence is due to Scripture, and what books are to be comprised in its Canon". It would appear from this repetition of the question of canonicity in the introduction of this chapter that, far from being a 'cavil' introduced for effect and not intended to be answered, the consideration of the Canon was one of the two main topics which were to be investigated. Furthermore Calvin does mention the Canon again explicitly in the next section when he condemns the assertion that "it remains doubtful what writings are to be ascribed to the prophets and apostles, unless<sup>48</sup> it be determined by the Church".

Moreover those who seek to derive a well defined answer to the question of canonical authentication from Calvin by examining the Commentaries, and disregard or explain away this passage in the Institutes, introduce with apparent unconcern a strange inconsistency into Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit's testimony. Calvin is represented as establishing the Canon on the rational grounds of historic and dogmatic criticism, and the divinity of the Scripture contained in that Canon on the supra-rational ground of the Spirit's testimony. If it is the Spirit who assures us that God is the author of Scripture then it is apparent that, in the act, he defines the Canon. The question of scriptural and canonical authentication are of the same order.



When Calvin states that there is no power of man which can convince us that the Scripture is from God but that we must seek the authentication of Scripture in Scripture itself, it is clear that he must also place the authentication of the Canon in the same category. Barth is merely making explicit what is not expressly formulated in this section, although it is clearly implied, when he writes, "The Bible constitutes itself the canon. It is the canon because it imposes itself<sup>49</sup> as such upon the Church and invariably does so".

Thus the refusal of some scholars to allow that Calvin regards the testimony of the Spirit as the necessary authority for establishing the Canon introduces an absolute inconsistency into his thought concerning Scripture; for then the form of the Canon is established on the rational critical grounds of human investigation, and the content of the Canon is seen to be of divine origin, and therefore of such a nature that it is to be included in the Canon, by the internal testimony of the Spirit. There are inconsistencies in Calvin's doctrine of Scripture, and this one is present to a certain degree, but not to the absolute degree that these scholars have presented it.

It is apparent that there is no just cause for concluding that Calvin did not include the canonical question in this chapter of his Institutes. Rather we are assured that it is included in the general

discussion of Scripture which follows, by the prominent place which it is given in the introductory section, by the fact that it is mentioned later, and by the fact that it is of the same order as the question of the authentication of Scripture. Thus, giving this passage its rightful place, we conclude that Calvin uses two principles in establishing the Canon. In the Institutes he appeals to the testimony of the Spirit and in the Commentaries he relies upon a system of dogmatic comparison and upon the authority of the consent of believers or of the Church.

It is important to notice however that Calvin regarded these two principles or rules as incommensurable. The one is applied from above and is expressed in divine terms, and the other is applied from below in terms of human measurement. The latter is helpful only when the former has been experienced and understood. Calvin declares that "those human testimonies --- will not be useless, if they follow that first and principal proof, as secondary aids to our imbecility".<sup>50</sup> Now in any problem of measurement it is perfectly legitimate to use two standards even if one is commensurable with the object to be measured and the other is not. The second may be used to give a approximate solution and frequently is used if it is more easily applied. But it must always be remembered that it does not give a final solution.

In his Institutes Calvin regarded the Spirit's testimony as primary; but the fact that he placed such great emphasis on the human testimonies in his Commentaries indicates that he found it impossible to produce a proof of canonicity on the basis of the Spirit's testimony which would convince men. The absolute authority which he gave in practice to this secondary principle is seen when it is realized that the touchstone to which Castellion was directed would have been applied with equal readiness to the other books of Scripture. Thus Calvin, although he rejected the authority of the Church in establishing the Canon in his theory, was willing to use it as the ultimate authority in his practice; and, although he elevated<sup>a</sup> the authenticating power of the Spirit in his Institutes, dispensed with it completely in his Commentaries. This introduces us to a discrepancy in his thought which persists throughout his works.

There is no sign that Calvin was conscious of this discrepancy. It was certainly in keeping with the trend of thought of his age that he should have used these different approaches to this problem. The appeal, to the Spirit, although not developed into an explicit doctrine until Calvin's time, had been basic to the whole Reformation reaction against the authority of the Church; and thus it was very natural for Calvin to use this appeal. Comparative critical methods had been applied

consistently to ancient documents since the beginning of the Renaissance; and it was natural for a scholar such as Calvin to apply these methods. On the other hand the unrestricted appeal to the testimony of the Spirit had already shown itself to be a disturbing influence, and comparative critical methods carried no more weight than the authority accredited to the scholar who applied them. Thus it is natural that Calvin, standing in the second generation of Reformers and keenly aware for the need for order in the Church, should have turned to the authority of the witness of Christian men or of the Church of the ages. Time had passed since Luther had felt free to draw distinctions between the books which were regarded as canonical, and Calvin was much more ready to bow to the weight of authority which the consent of the faithful carried. He was still able to include the testifying power of the Spirit, indeed it was necessary for his doctrine of Scripture that he do so, and he was still able to apply comparative critical methods; but it is clear that the statement concerning Castellion which gives absolute authority concerning the Canon to the Church of the ages represents Calvin's final position. It was to the "constant witness of the universal Church" that he appealed when challenged.

It would be unfair however to classify his critical endeavours as an unessential influence of the



intellectual atmosphere of his day, or to relegate his appeal to the testimony of the Spirit to the category of an unnecessary afterthought added to preserve the integrity of his theological system. The Church authority which Calvin accepts is not that of the Roman Church of his day, but the Christian witness of the ages which is established by historico-critical methods. This witness is a first derivative of the testimony of the Spirit. The noble statements of the Institutes, (Book I, ch. vii), can then be seen as statements of theory drawn out in a polemical context; a republication of the actual process by which the Church came to acknowledge the Canon, directed against the specious a posteriori arguments of those who demanded implicit acceptance of Church decrees rather than against the authority which the consent of the faithful carried. This theory may then be regarded as having practical application only in a derivative form, that is, in the agreement of Christian men throughout the ages. This reasoning, which could be developed to give Calvin a completely consistent position, must not however be carried too far; for Calvin's statements are not completely consistent. It does indicate however that Calvin was in a position to use these different methods without apparent discomfort.

Any such attempt to make a synthesis of the methods which Calvin employs in establishing the Canon must

remain merely as a suggested footnote to his thought; a footnote which he never wrote and appears at times to deny. For although in the Institutes he classifies the consent of the faithful as an authority which mediates the Spirit's testimony -

such an agreement of minds, so widely distant in place and so completely dissimilar in manners and opinions, ought to have a great influence upon us, since it was plain it was effected only by the power of heaven, - 51

yet he classifies this as a merely secondary authority. Nevertheless in the practical life of the Church this secondary authority is elevated to a primary position, and Calvin's thought remains with its discrepancy.

B. The Unity and Authority of Scripture.

The distinction noted in the discussion of Calvin's attitude to the Canon is maintained throughout his works. It is a distinction between theological thought and historical statement, between the interpretation of facts and bare facts, between the realm of faith and that of human reason. It is a distinction which leads to difficulties, for the theological statement about certain facts of history is quite different from the mere historical statement. The theological interpretation of events in time is made from a point of reference which sometimes magnifies that which would otherwise appear to be insignificant and sometimes relegates that which would otherwise appear to be important to an extremely minor place; the eyes of faith focused on the Cross see it lit up with transforming radiance while the eyes of reason see nothing but darkness. The problem of how to express in rational terms a fact which has been grasped on the supra-rational plane of faith, of how to explain the knowledge gained by faith in the same terminology as it is customary to use to express historical and scientific truth, was as real in Calvin's day as it is now. The distinction must be maintained; for theology can never be equated with mere history. And yet, by the nature of the human situation, it is a distinction which can never be extended to complete

separation. For a Christian the plane of theological statement and the plane of historic fact are never set in such a situation that they do not meet. They do and must meet; for Christianity is grounded in history.

The Christian then stands in a paradoxical situation. He is in history, and yet knows that his life is in a context which also transcends history. His faith is closely connected with historical acts, and yet has meaning only if there is something beyond these acts. The tension involved in this paradox is a difficult one to express clearly. It is difficult fully to incorporate its implications into a system of theology. We shall see that Calvin, although he did not deal with the problem explicitly, was involved in the difficulties associated with it continually. He saw both sides, but was unable to remain completely in the paradox.

The distinction between theology and history in Calvin's thought and the primary importance of the former in his mind is to be seen clearly from his statements about the unity of Scripture, statements which are of great importance for his conception of the authority of Scripture.

#### The Unity of Scripture.

The books of Scripture are seen to be related to definite historical periods, composed by men of faith in different historical circumstances and in different ways. The stories of Genesis, when first committed to



writing,were not something new and strange,for they had been familiarly known for a long time and,after having been passed down from generation to generation,had been placed on a more permanent<sup>a e</sup> record. So also Calvin regards the books of the prophets as having been composed in a way appropriate to the social conditions of the time.

The prophets,having publically addressed the people,drew up a brief abstract of their discourse and placed it on the gates of the temple,that all might see and become fully acquainted with the prophecy. When it had been exposed for a sufficient number of days it was removed by the ministers of the temple and placed in the treasury,that it might remain on permanent<sup>a e</sup> record.----- Those who have carefully and judiciously perused the prophets will agree with me in thinking that their discourses have not been arranged in a regular order,but that the roll was made up as the occasion required. 53.

The composition of the New Testament books is seen to follow a more normal order,but Calvin is quick to comment on the difference in style between the two epistles of Peter,and concludes that the second epistle was produced by some of Peter's disciples,who wrote down "what the necessities of the time required". Thus not only the form in which the books appear but also the content is seen to have definite relation to historical factors which it is necessary to know in order to understand the writings fully. The situation in early Israel must be known in order to understand the legal codes; the historical course of Israel's settlement,

worldly development, exile and return must be understood if the words of the prophets are to be understood in their true context and with their full meaning; and the circumstances of the early Church must be known if the writings of the apostles are to be understood and appreciated. Thus, in introducing the Epistle to the Galatians, Calvin first indicates the political and historical background of these people before describing the actual situation which called this epistle forth. The epistle was written because false prophets had been seeking to spread erroneous doctrine by enforcing religious legalism. It may appear to be a small thing, but Paul attacked it vigorously because he saw its wider implications. It denied the Gospel, bound the conscience, and removed the distinction between the Old and New Testaments. "This is the reason why he fights with so much earnestness and vehemence; and having learned from him the important and serious nature of the controversy, it is our duty to read with greater attention!"<sup>55</sup>

To the historian the first essential in approaching the books of Scripture is to understand the historical background which sets these books in their right context. The next logical step is to assert that, because these books have been produced in a variety of historical circumstances and in different ways, some will be of greater value than others. Those which are written to a general situation will be of greater importance



than those which confine themselves to a minor question set in an extremely localised situation; those which review from a distance in time are more likely to bring out the real meaning of an event than those which merely recount the event. This is precisely the position which Calvin adopts. There is an obvious preference for doctrinal books as opposed to those which are primarily historical. Romans, the first book to receive a commentary from Calvin, is so excellent that he dare not praise it lest by his weak words he might obscure its merits; but this fact he lays down as certain, and it is one which "can never be sufficiently appreciated", that, "when anyone gains a knowledge of this epistle, he has an entrance opened to him to all the most hidden<sup>56</sup> treasures of Scripture". With the great central theme of Justification by Faith this epistle becomes the interpretative principle of Calvin's theology. Its condemnation of man in his fallen state and its emphasis upon the offer of salvation through faith in Christ is a basic tenet of all his thought. Also among the Gospel writers there are distinct differences to be seen:

there is so much difference in setting forth the power of Christ, that the other three, compared with John, have hardly sparks of that full brightness which appears so conspicuously in him ---. 57

Although there are these differences of historical context and content which are apparent in the books of Scripture, yet even on the historical level there is a

unity which could be asserted. The fact that they have been brought together and placed in one volume would give some meaning to the term. But when Calvin speaks of the Unity of the Holy Scriptures he is treating the subject in a different way. The historical differences, though great, disappear before the theological assertion of unity. The Scriptures are no longer a collection of books written by individuals throughout the ages of history, but are a unified product under the authorship of the Holy Spirit. They are no longer the words of pious men but the word of the Holy Spirit who speaks through these men. Individual characteristics<sup>58</sup> vanish in the content of the sacred doctrine of God. Although, from his own mouth, we know that Isaiah was a "man of unclean lips", and that Jeremiah could not speak, "for he was a child", yet their words in Scripture are not words of impurity and folly, for "their lips were holy and pure<sup>59</sup> when they began to be the organs of the Holy Spirit". It is on this basis that Calvin can use the name of a canonical writer, the Holy Spirit, and Scripture almost interchangeably in quoting from the Scriptures. "Paul asserts" can mean exactly the same as "the Holy Spirit asserts", or the "Scripture says"<sup>60</sup>. Even the difference in value of the various books ceases to be asserted. The individual may, of course, hear the Spirit speaking with greater clarity in this or that book, but he does not declare that, because of this, the particular book



has any greater authority. Since the Holy Spirit is the author each book carries his name and authority, and in this respect there is equality. Thus Calvin concludes his remarks on the difference between John and the Synoptic writers in setting forth the power of Christ with the words "yet we commend them all alike".<sup>61</sup>

This conception of the unity of Scripture necessitated a discussion of the relation of the Old and New Testaments. Despite all the changes in emphasis which changing historical situations bring there is one theme which is seen to run through the whole of Scripture. In desert and in town, in poverty and in prosperity, in Jewish Church and Christian Church the same message is proclaimed; it is in "the remission of sins, the promise of eternal life, and the message of salvation",<sup>62</sup> that Calvin finds the principle of unity. The covenant of all the fathers differs from that which is received in Christ in administration only and in no way in substance.<sup>63</sup>

Three points are brought forward to establish the unity of the Testaments. First, that as the hope of immortality is basic to the New Testament message so it was to the Old; the promises of material prosperity given to the Jews were not given as their ultimate goal, but directed them on to a greater and more enduring hope. Second, that as the promise given in Christ is founded solely on the mercy of God so the covenants of the Old Testament are not founded upon the merit of man, but only

upon divine mercy. Third, that in both Testaments Christ is both known and possessed as the Mediator, and that through him men are united to God and receive the promises. ~~It~~ It is obvious that such an approach depends on the typological method of exegesis. A discussion of Calvin's application of this method and of its validity will appear later in this chapter.

It is mainly on the basis of such an exegetical approach that Calvin explains the differences which he sees to exist between the Testaments. Whereas the Israelites had an inferior mode of instruction in which the grace of the future life was expressed under the figures of earthly blessings, the New Testament has a clear revelation of this grace. Calvin maintains strongly that, for the Jews, the possession of the land of Canaan was not the supreme and ultimate blessedness but that, typically, it represented for them the future inheritance which they believed to be prepared for them in heaven. Again, whereas the Old Covenant was confirmed by means of sacrifices and ceremonies the New is ratified by Christ. This is seen to be merely a matter of administration; for God's covenant with man is not divided, but is one, eternal, and never to be abolished.

The Old Testament of the Lord was that which was delivered to the Jews, involved in a shadowy and inefficacious observance of ceremonies, and that it was therefore temporary, because it remained as it were in suspense till it was supported by a firm and substantial confirmation;-- it was made new and eternal when it was consecrated and established by the blood of Christ. 64

There are also differences between the Law and the Gospel which Calvin regards merely as distinctions between the clarity of the New Testament and the more obscure dispensation which preceded it. There is no  
<sup>65</sup> difference in substance. The Law is seen to be more than mere law; it was the Gospel as yet seen only in a shadowy form; and its legal observances without any  
<sup>66</sup> reference to Christ were mere absurdities. Thus the Gospel was not something new added to the Law, but was a clearer statement of that same covenant of grace which had been given to the early Jewish Fathers. For

the Gospel has not succeeded the whole law, so as to introduce a different way of salvation; but rather to confirm and ratify the promises of the law and to connect the body with the shadows. <sup>67</sup>.

The final difference noted by Calvin is between the nationalistic spirit of the Old Testament and the universalistic spirit of the New. There is a vast difference between the statements of Moses and Paul. Moses declared that "the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them,  
<sup>68</sup> even you above all people"; but Paul showed that God's love is all-embracing when he said, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but  
<sup>69</sup> Christ is all and in all". "Has God changed?" asks Calvin, and replies with a forceful negative. God has always remained constant. It is man who has changed. As he has been taught by God so he has developed until

God could reveal himself in his full brightness and show his full purpose. Throughout the history of Israel God has been accommodating himself to the capacity of men and changing his approach, just as a parent instructs his child differently in childhood and in youth, yet always with the same purpose. Despite the differences between the Testaments there is one purpose in them both, and in each the same doctrine has been delivered.<sup>70</sup> What this means for Calvin's definition and use of Scripture will be discussed in the later sections of this chapter. At present it must be noted that this assertion of unity is made on a theological plane. It is the doctrine which is emphasised; it is the doctrine which unifies. Historically speaking there are differences; but these are seen to be merely the temporal form in which the timeless truths of God's action and purpose are clothed because of the incapacity of man.

#### The Authority of Scripture.

On the same theological plane as he sought to establish the content and unity of the Canon, Calvin asserts the authority of Scripture. As the Canon defines itself to be the Canon, so Scripture as a whole defines itself to be the truth of God. "The Scripture exhibits as clear evidences of its truth as white and black things



do of their colour or sweet and bitter things of their  
<sup>71</sup>  
 taste". Calvin declares that he finds it very difficult  
 to explain what he means in this section, for although  
 he is only seeking to describe what every believer knows  
 with his whole being, yet it is impossible to write it  
 down because of the very nature of faith. For the  
 statement, that Scripture is the truth of God, can be  
 made and understood only from the standpoint of faith.  
 The authority of Scripture can be established only on  
 the theological plane, and therefore it is impossible to  
 prove this authority to an unbeliever. It is possible  
 to argue with him and disclose the falsity of his views;  
 but that will not convince him of the true nature of  
 Scripture. It is possible to gain great praise for  
 Scripture by pointing to the sublimity of the subject-  
 matter and style, by pointing to its antiquity and the  
 power displayed in the miracles which it records, or by  
 presenting the witness of the Church throughout the  
 centuries and of those who have suffered martyrdom for  
 its truths, and the fact that Calvin devotes one chapter  
 of his Institutes to this type of apologetic shows that  
 he did attach some considerable importance to this  
 activity of men; yet all this is of no ultimate value  
 in itself for a "saving knowledge of God". The  
 certainty of the true nature and authority of the  
 Scripture comes from the "internal persuasion of the  
<sup>72</sup>  
 Holy Spirit". This testimony, coming from a higher

source than human reason, convinces man that in the Scripture he hears the voice of God.

Illuminated by him, we now believe that the Scriptures are from God, not from our own judgement or that of others, but we esteem the certainty that we have received it from God's own mouth by the ministry of men, to be superior to that of any human judgement, and equal to an intuitive perception of God himself in it. 73.

The Scriptures are then self-authenticating, for the Spirit, who is their author, has so impressed his character upon his work that through it he also establishes their authority. There is no need, nor indeed any possibility, of human proof establishing the fact that they are from God; for that proof comes from the testimony of the Spirit working mysteriously through that which he himself has produced. This being so, the authority of Scripture, once it has been established, is absolute. This Calvin declares in no uncertain terms.

But since we are not favoured with daily oracles from heaven, and since it is only in the Scriptures that the Lord hath been pleased to preserve his truth in perpetual remembrance, it obtains the same credit with believers, when they are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they heard the very words pronounced by God himself. 74.

This is an extremely high doctrine of Scripture; and it is one which Calvin is emphasising continually. The most comprehensive statement in this connection occurs in his comment on 2 Timothy 3:16:

This is a principle which distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God hath spoken to us, and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak

at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. Whoever then wishes to profit in the Scriptures, let him, first of all, lay this down as a settled point, that the Law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men, but dictated by the Holy Spirit.-----  
 This is the first clause, that we owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God; because it has proceeded from him alone, and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it. 75.

This being the nature of the Holy Scriptures, it is absolutely necessary for man to study them that he may hear the message which God has intended for him. Calvin points out that no man can have the least knowledge of sound doctrine, which is the basis of true religion,<sup>76</sup> without having been a careful student of the Scriptures. If we seek after God without them we immediately lose<sup>77</sup> our way.

Alongside this necessity, Calvin asserts the sufficiency of the Scriptures. In them God's purpose and his promises are set forth, and to them man must attend if he would receive the knowledge which leads to salvation.

For the Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing necessary and useful to be known is omitted, so nothing is taught which is not beneficial to know. Let us, I say, permit the Christian man to open his heart and his ears to all the discourses addressed to him by God, only with this moderation, that as soon as the Lord closes his sacred mouth he shall also desist from further inquiry. 78.

This conception of Scripture as limiting is a necessary corollary of its sufficiency and occurs frequently in Calvin's works. Once it is declared that the Scripture contains all that it is necessary to know for salvation, and that in it alone man must study, then all investigation of God's way of salvation which neglects the Scripture is of necessity futile and vain. Calvin draws a most gruesome picture of the man who seeks to force his way into the secret recesses of Divine wisdom:

he precipitates himself to be absorbed in the profound of an unfathomable gulf; then he entangles himself in numberless and inextricable snares; then he sinks himself in an abyss of total darkness. For it is right that the folly of the human mind should be thus punished when it attempts to rise by its own ability to the summit of Divine wisdom. 79.

Furthermore, in opposition to those who asserted that  
80  
the Scriptures were difficult and obscure, Calvin propounded his doctrine of the clarity and simplicity of Scripture. The Scriptures are clear. In them alone is the power to dispel our darkness and "give us a clear  
81  
view of the true God". To the eyes of faith the Scripture is an all-sufficient light which shines upon the way which man must tread.

Whoever, then, will open his eyes through the obedience of faith, shall by experience know that the Scripture has not in vain been called a light. It is, indeed, obscure to the unbelieving; but they who are given up to destruction are wilfully blind. Execrable, therefore, is the blasphemy of the Papists, who pretend that the light of Scripture does nothing but dazzle the eyes, in order to keep the simple from reading it. 82.



The Scriptures are written simply that all may see the clear light of truth. So simple are they, in fact, that it seems to Calvin that they were written only for the ignorant.<sup>83</sup>

It is apparent from this discussion that Scripture has quite a different nature when viewed through eyes of faith as contrasted with reason. On the one side it is a medium through which God, by the activity of his Holy Spirit, makes himself known to the faithful; on the other it is a book which speaks of God in a beautiful style, which comes from ancient times with a message of his power, and which is recommended to our consideration by the voice of the Church and of the martyrs. On the one side it is the composition of the Holy Spirit who dictated his words to his faithful scribes and delivered a lesson without impurity or mistake; on the other it is a composition of a number of fallible men of different periods of history who were interested in particular historical events and wrote what they understood was God's message for their time. Theology and history, faith and reason, interpretation and fact, - these are the contrasting alternatives with which a Christian must work. He is a man set in history and furnished with reason; but he is also a person for whom Christ died and for whom both history and reason are transformed by faith. For when faith becomes the guiding force in life, history is given a new centre

and reason a new point of reference in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. So it is with Scripture. It is not possible to equate the term Scripture used in an historically controlled process of thought with Scripture as understood by faith. The one is a number of books written by different men at different times; the other is one book with one author who, contemporaneous with all ages, proclaims his eternal message.

We have become increasingly aware of this peculiar nature of the Scripture in our own day as is instanced by the following modern quotation.

There will never come a time when it can be labelled and put on its shelf in the library, amongst other historical religious books. Its contents will always remain disturbing, and the most humanistic and self-sufficient age will always feel a certain uneasiness in its presence. This sense of uneasiness is (and will be) created by the fact that the subject-matter of the Bible concerns God - not just a God whom ancient Jews and pre-scientific Christians used to talk about, but the Maker of the vast universe, of man and his world, God, who has addressed a message to every soul and therefore makes a demand upon all men. There is no getting away from such a God, just because He is not a god, but God. The theme of the Bible is not a god - whether a god of love or of wrath or of anything else - but simply and utterly God. The Bible is the place where God is encountered, where His message is spoken and His will is proclaimed. 84.

There is no doubt that Calvin also was aware of the dual nature of Scripture. He was aware of its divine nature and of its historical origins. The only question is whether he has been able to formulate his Doctrine

of Scripture in a way which fully expresses the truth about Scripture. And this is an important question; for it is upon his Doctrine of Scripture that his assertion of its absolute authority rests.

Calvin stated his Doctrine of Scripture in an extreme form and certain questions immediately leap to mind. If the Scriptures are simple and clear, sufficient and absolutely necessary, and if they record the dictation of the Holy Spirit, is there left any place for reason? If these clear writings contain the very words from the mouth of God, and furthermore, all the words of divine wisdom that man needs to know, is there any need for commentary? If it is the "first clause" of religion to give the same reverence to Scripture as to God, this is surely also the last clause; for the intangible, invisible, eternal God has been pleased to place himself in a tangible, visible, finite volume. Is not its worship the beginning and end of religion?

These questions are formulated in an extreme form, and it is obvious that Calvin would give a negative reply to them. Nevertheless they are legitimate questions to put to the extreme formulations in which he presents the divine nature of Scripture. It is now necessary to consider the way Calvin used Scripture to see if his high doctrine is upheld in practice.

### C. Calvin's Hermeneutics.

#### His attitude to the Text of Scripture.

Calvin approaches the text of Scripture with an obvious respect and honour and yet with a well-reasoned and natural critical emphasis. Although his main purpose is not to produce a critical work which will establish an originally pure text, but, in general, accepting what is given, to try and indicate the true spiritual meaning, nevertheless his critical faculty remains alert. Trained in the Humanist school he could not but apply its methods to the books of Scripture which were produced in a setting of time and historically mediated; gifted with an alert and logical mind he could not but notice the errors which had woven themselves into the text; well-versed in ancient tongues he could not but condemn the mistakes which had been incorporated in the translations used in his day. He detects the hand of a slack copyist; he compares conflicting manuscripts; he points to the use of an oral tradition which is not in agreement with the history of Moses; he discusses the question of the inaccurate verbal use of the Old Testament by New Testament writers, and sees the problem raised by the difference in time sequence in the Synoptic Gospels. The hand of a careful critic works through the text. Calvin discusses, condemns, accepts, rejects, with a sense



freedom and a clear knowledge of the rights and limits of the critical method. Here a word is rejected<sup>91</sup> because of its obvious irrelevance; there a verse is<sup>92</sup> accepted because of the continuity of style and theme; here the numerical superiority of more recent manuscripts is weighed against the authority of<sup>93</sup> antiquity and found wanting; there the measuring rod of the consent of the faithful, or the test of apostolic<sup>94</sup> doctrine, is raised. Typical of his method is his well-balanced and authoritatively based comment on John 8:1-11:

It is plain enough that this passage was unknown anciently to the Greek Churches, and some conjecture that it was brought from some other place and inserted here. But as it has always been received by the Latin Churches, and is found in many old Greek manuscripts, and contains nothing unworthy of an apostolic spirit, there is no reason why we should not apply it to our advantage.<sup>95</sup>

It is apparent that Calvin had the tools of an expert critic at his disposal and that he used them when the occasion arose. But the application of critical principles was never a primary but always a secondary consideration. He was not afraid to admit uncertainty in the solution of a textual problem; for the important thing was not merely to discover the right word or phrase but to understand the spiritual content of the passage. Calvin the critic was never merely a critic. Criticism was necessary; but with Calvin it bowed before the master it was called to serve. Where there was doubt it must establish the truth in

so far as it was able, but always to this end, that we might be able to "apply it to our advantage".

Nevertheless Calvin's freedom with the text causes us to add a qualifying footnote to his Doctrine of Scripture. Now his dogmatic statements concerning the divinity of Scripture cannot be regarded as applying to all the words of Scripture as received. There are occasional errors in the text which may be discovered by a historico-critical approach, and which must be rectified if possible.

#### The Grammatical and Historical Principle of Exegesis.

In his discussions on the validity of the decrees of Church Councils Calvin accepted those which had given the authority of Scripture pride of place and used it as a standard to which all else was subject. The decisions which they reached and the articles of faith which they defended are accepted and revered as sacred "because they contain nothing but the pure<sup>96</sup> and natural interpretation of the Scripture". This defines Calvin's approach to the exegesis of Scripture. He seeks to offer interpretations which are "natural,<sup>97</sup> suitable, and obvious", and which express the "true and<sup>98</sup> certain sense of the Scripture". The Bible is not an obscure book in whose exposition allegorical explanations and mystical symbols must be used; but the true meaning of Scripture is "the natural and<sup>99</sup> obvious" meaning, which we must embrace and abide by

resolutely.

At the beginning of his epistle to Simon Grynaeus Calvin defines the chief excellence of an exegete to consist in "lucid brevity", a standard to which he seeks to adhere throughout his works. Then he adds,

since it is almost his only work to lay open the mind of the writer whom he undertakes to explain, the degree in which he leads away his readers from it, in that degree he goes away from his purpose, and in a manner wanders from his own boundaries. 100

Thus, for the exegete, almost his only work is to show the "natural sense" which is to be found in the words of the writer, in order to bring out the meaning which he had in mind when he wrote. In order to do this there are certain obvious principles which the exegete must apply. He must understand the principles of grammar, that the words which he investigates may be understood in their correct formal relation with other words; he must apply the principle of relating words or phrases to the context from which they come, in order that the meaning of the whole may not be misrepresented; and he must apply an historical principle, that the words and statements may not be distorted in an unhistorical manner.

These principles Calvin seeks to apply. He is frequently to be found explaining the grammatical construction of a sentence and commenting on the different meanings words can have before presenting

what he considers to be the true meaning in a particular case.<sup>101</sup> He condemns the literalists who claim that the "words of Christ are not subject to any common rule and ought not to be examined on the principles of grammar"<sup>102</sup>, and classifies the phrase, "this is my body", as the same type of "metonymical form of expression" as is often used in the Scripture particularly with reference to the sacraments.<sup>103</sup> In confuting his opponents in the interpretation of Genesis 4:7, he bases his conclusion on the "subject itself and grammatical propriety".<sup>104</sup> It is apparent that Calvin would apply the principle of grammar in every case; for without this there is no possibility of reaching the true and literal meaning. This principle in no way detracts from the majesty of Scripture, and, since the Scripture is delivered in written form, it is absolutely necessary that it be applied.

Nothing prevents us therefore from believing Christ when he speaks, and immediately acquiescing in every word he utters. The only question is, whether it be criminal to enquire into his genuine meaning. 105.

The grammatical form in which the Scriptures are delivered is not a factor in the divine dispensation which carries its own rules and is sacrosanct from the application of ordinary principles, but it is by the very application of these principles that the true meaning may be reached.



There is also a continual necessity of relating word to sentence and text to context; for Scripture is not to be used in a superstitious way in which words are taken from their context and used to prove anything that is required. The Anabaptists press the literal words of Christ, "Swear not at all"; and Calvin declares that they betray "gross ignorance, when they press upon us a single word, and pass over with closed eyes the whole scope of the passage"<sup>106</sup>. When the Schoolmen pervert a statement of Paul's to prove that Christ gained merit for himself, Calvin points to the context and shows that "in that passage Paul is not treating the cause of the exultation of Christ but only showing the consequence of it --"<sup>107</sup>. And when those who seek to prove justification by works from Paul's statement that the doers of the law and not the hearers shall be justified, he declares that they "deserve to be laughed at even by children", and explains the meaning by an appeal to the context.<sup>108</sup> There are innumerable quotations which could be given where "the context explains the meaning";<sup>109</sup> for, as Calvin declares, "there are many passages of Scripture the sense of which depends on the circumstances connected with them".<sup>110</sup> This principle is one which Calvin is applying continually, for the structure of Scripture necessitates that it be applied; but it is mainly in confuting false doctrine that he refers to it explicitly.

It has been shown previously that Calvin regarded the historical principle of exegesis as essential in the interpretation of Scripture. The application of this principle shows the true meaning of the scriptural passage as it presents the historical context in which the words were originally written and thus helps the exegete to understand the mind of the writer.

For Calvin the Scriptures were historical documents, and he is continually explaining the historical setting before proceeding to draw out the meaning. His commentary on Psalm 102 is typical of all his work. In the introduction to the Psalm he explains the historical background:

This prayer seems to have been dedicated to the faithful when they were languishing in captivity in Babylon. Sorrowful and humbled, they first bewail their afflictions. In the next place, they plead with God for the restoration of the holy city and temple. To encourage themselves to come before him in prayer with the greater confidence, they call to remembrance the divine promises in reference to the happy restoration both of the kingdom and of the priesthood; and they not only assure themselves of deliverance from captivity, but also beseech God to bring kings and nations in subjection to himself. In the close of the Psalm, having interposed a brief complaint concerning their distressing and afflicted condition, they draw consolation from the eternity of God; for in adopting his servants to a better hope, he has separated them from the common lot of men. 111

This historical context is referred to in almost every verse of the detailed commentary in order that the words may be seen in their original setting; and, having thus shown their true meaning, Calvin explains their

message for his day. It is the historical principle which helps to explain their meaning for both past and present. Thus on verse 1, "O Jehovah! Hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto Thee", he writes:

In speaking thus the captive Jews bear witness to the severe and excruciating distress which they endured, and to the ardent desire to obtain some alleviation with which they were inflamed.--- We ought particularly to attend to the circumstance already adverted to, that we are thus stirred up by the Holy Spirit to the duty of prayer on behalf of the common welfare of the Church. Whilst every man takes sufficient care of his own interests, there is scarcely one in a hundred affected as he ought to be with the calamities of the Church.  
112.

Without trouble or strain Calvin moves easily from the historical context to the original meaning of the words and thence to their relevance for the present.

Not only does the application of the historical principle reveal the relevance of a passage for a later age but it also shows what is irrelevant. This is seen most clearly in the commands of Scripture, for many of these must be related to a particular situation and are not to be regarded as of permanent validity. Thus the laws of Moses have to be seen in the historical context in which they were formulated so that their true meaning and purpose may be understood. In his Harmony of the Pentateuch Calvin groups the contents of the books under two main heads: one contains historical material and the other doctrinal. In the latter group there are four divisions. First, the



Prefaces which show the dignity of the Law,"that God may be duly revered";second,the Ten Commandments; third,the Supplements which contain instruction concerning Ceremonies and Political Laws;and fourth, the statements as to the ends and uses of the Law. In this grouping the third section is to be regarded as applying to the particular historical situation. They are "appendages which add not the least degree to the completeness of the Law,but whose object is to retain the pious in the spiritual worship of God --.As to the Political Ordinances nothing will obviously be found in them which adds to the perfection of the second table".<sup>113</sup> Calvin sees them as of definite value in their historical setting,and the general principles included in them,which are also given in the Decalogue,as important for later ages; but the minute details are no longer relevant.

Similarly the words of Christ and the writings of the apostles must be understood in the context of the particular historical situation in which they occur. Thus the command of Christ to the young man who enquired what he must do to have eternal life,that he should sell all and give to the poor,is to be seen against the background of the actual situation. Christ was not giving a rule for all to follow,for "he had no other object in view than to correct the false conviction of the young man".<sup>114</sup> He was merely expressing



the principle of self-denial, which is contained in the Law under the condemnation of covetousness, in words which would show the man the inner meaning of the Law for his particular case and convince him of his guilt. Paul's statements about the Law in Galatians will not be fully understood unless it is seen that he is using the word in a restricted sense, because "he was then engaged in a controversy with erroneous teachers, who pretended that we merit righteousness by the works of the Law". James, who gives instructions for the anointing of sick persons, was speaking to that historical period "when the gift of healing was as yet continued". But, as the gift continued only for a time, so the Sacrament of unction must also be understood as limited to an historical period.

There are many apostolic injunctions concerning the Christian life which are to be regarded as being relevant in the apostolic age, but not as decrees of permanent validity or application. Often all that a Christian can now gain from these is a general principle which the writer was applying in his particular situation. Thus with regard to Paul's rule that a woman should not prophesy with her head uncovered Calvin states: "it might suit sufficiently well to say that the apostle requires women to show their modesty". Calvin's attitude to particular

injunctions relating to ceremonies and discipline can be judged from the test example he takes of kneeling for prayer.

It is at once both human and divine. It is of God, as it forms a branch of that decorum which is recommended to our attention by the apostle; it is of men, as it particularly designates that which has been hinted at rather than clearly expressed. 119.

The fact that Paul concludes a list of particular commands with the words, "Let all be done decently and in order", indicates that "he did not wish to bind consciences by the foregoing precepts, as if they were of themselves necessary, but only in so far as they were subservient to propriety and <sup>120</sup>peace".

This is a very different approach from that which, from a study of his Doctrine of Scripture, one would expect him to adopt. Far from regarding the words of Scripture as if God had spoken them and giving them the reverence due to Deity, Calvin is prepared to classify much of Scripture as historical matter which is of merely secondary importance. Far from maintaining that there is nothing belonging to man mixed with Scripture, he is prepared to place much that has been conditioned by the human situation in a relative category.

Calvin's self-avowed main purpose as an exegete - to lay open the mind of the writer - would seem to be largely fulfilled by the careful application of the grammatical and historical principles of exegesis. There is however something required in addition. There

must also be the endeavour sympathetically to enter into the whole personality of the man. It is impossible fully to lay open the mind of a writer unless this less tangible principle is also applied. But this principle should be controlled in its application by the careful use of the grammatical and historical principles lest, by its indeterminate nature, it be used in a biased way. Calvin, however, does not exercise this caution. Rather we find that at this point he introduces principles of exegesis derived from his theological standpoint which greatly affect the grammatical principle of the relation of passage to context and provide a new standard by which he can evaluate historically conditioned material.

#### The Influence of Calvin's Dogmatics upon his Exegesis.

Calvin the exegete comes to the books of Scripture not as a man whose mind is a tabula rasa, not as a man whose faith is as yet embryonic, but as one who has seen the deep unity of Scripture and as one who has the key to all Scripture cast for him with clear outlines. The Gospel of Christ, namely, "the remission of sins, the promise of eternal life, and the message  
121  
of salvation", is the pattern which defines, and the doctrine which sums up, all Scripture. "To lay open the mind of the writer" - this is the task of the exegete; but no longer is the writer merely a human

writer nor is the exegete merely a human critic. The writer is human and also the organ of the Holy Spirit; the exegete is a man and also one to whom the Holy Spirit has spoken. Thus there are other factors which the exegete must take into consideration. He must remember always to be careful "to investigate and<sup>122</sup> meditate upon things conducive to edification"; he must remember "the analogy of faith, to which Paul directs us to conform every interpretation of the<sup>123</sup> Scripture"; he must remember that when Paul speaks of the Holy Scriptures, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus", that he states what should be sought in Scripture and how it should be sought. Salvation is the purpose, the faith of Christ is the design and the sum of the<sup>124</sup> Scriptures.

Calvin's conception of the Scripture as a unity under the authorship of the Holy Spirit, and as expressing a divine purpose, provides him with a means of extending greatly the grammatical principle of the relation of passage to context and of estimating the importance of historical factors in the Scripture. For, when the Scripture is regarded in this light, the context to which a particular section must be related is not only the immediate context but also Scripture as a whole. Not only does the sense of many passages depend on the circumstances in which and for which



they were written, but also many passages are open to misinterpretation unless they are seen in the light of other statements in Scripture even though these, historically speaking, may have been written for a different time and in a totally different situation.

Thus, although some theologians would point to the fact that, when David numbered the people, he was forgiven and yet suffered punishment, and deduce that sins are not exactly freely forgiven, Calvin deplores the fact "that they fix their eyes thus on the example of David alone, and are unaffected by so many instances in which they might behold the gratuitous remission of sins".<sup>125</sup> So also, after he has deduced the doctrine that faith, repentance, and confidence are necessary in prayer, he turns to those examples in Scripture where the Lord has answered prayers which have not come from "a calm and well-regulated heart", and declares, "that a<sup>126</sup> permanent rule is not annulled by particular examples". By applying his theological principle of exegesis Calvin can assert that, when the Psalmist collects prayers which have come from believers and unbelievers and shows that God has answered them, he is not teaching that such prayers are typical of the ones which God requires, but his purpose is to demonstrate God's mercy. The teaching of Scripture as a whole shows that these prayers cannot be taken as showing the type of prayer which is acceptable to God.

This principle is basic to Calvin's whole exegetical method and is one which he is using continually. It is the practical application of the theological statement that the Spirit is the author of Scripture and that, therefore, the Scripture cannot be inconsistent. Although there may appear to be conflicting statements and examples given, the conflict can always be resolved by consulting the general tenor of Scripture. The extent to which it brought a changed approach to the Reformation exegesis of certain parts of Scripture is seen from Calvin's attitude to the Epistle of James. Luther had been willing to disregard James because of his emphasis on works; but Calvin states:

The Spirit asserts by the mouth of Paul that Abraham obtained righteousness by faith, not by works; we likewise teach, that we are all justified by faith without the works of the Law. The same Spirit affirms by James, that both Abraham's righteousness and ours consists in works and not in faith only. That the Spirit is not inconsistent with himself is a certain truth. 127.

It is obvious that this type of approach has led Calvin far beyond the boundaries which he laid down when he defined the main task of an exegete to consist in laying open the mind of the writer whom he undertakes to explain. At times, it is true, the writer is regarded as a man whose thought and expression are historically conditioned, and whose words must be related to their particular context; but at others the writer is regarded as the Holy Spirit whose words

must be related to a wider context and given the reverence due to God himself. There is a deep-seated difference between these principles of exegesis. Grammatical and historical investigation can be carried out in a scientific manner; but sympathetically to understand the purpose behind all Scripture, which is necessary to establish doctrinal content, requires an act of faith. Is there an incommensurability between these two types of exegesis which precludes their combined use? This Calvin would deny; and his continual use of the different principles shows how definite would be his denial. How then does he explain the historically conditioned form in which the divine doctrine is clothed, and how does he use the historically conditioned and historically delivered doctrine of the eternal God? For it is not as though the pure and eternal was clothed in historic garments in such a way that these can be removed without difficulty. The doctrine itself appears to change with the centuries so that it also, to some extent, partakes of the nature of historical contingency.

#### The Theological Principles of Typology and Accommodation

In seeking to reconcile his historic analysis with his theological exegesis Calvin applies two main principles: the principle of Typology and the principle of Accommodation.

The principle of Typology is used to explain the apparent changes in God's teaching throughout the process of history, and to show the continuity of the divine purpose. The revelation given in Christ is seen, not as something completely new which dispensed with all that had preceded it, but as a fulfillment. Although the Gospel, in its true sense, applies to the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and "those writers are chargeable with a want of precision who say that it was common to all ages, and who suppose the prophets, <sup>128</sup> equally with the apostles, were ministers of the Gospel", yet Calvin holds that, "taken in a large sense, it comprehends all those testimonies which the Lord formerly gave to the Fathers, of his mercy and parental <sup>129</sup> favour". It was not displayed in its fullest light under the Old Covenant; for there truth was "veiled" <sup>130</sup> and "shadowy". But it was present behind the veil and hidden in the shadows. Christ was present in the Old Testament revelation.

The saints of former ages, therefore, had no other knowledge of God than what they obtained by beholding him in the Son, as in a mirror. By this observation I mean that God never manifested himself to man in any other way than by his Son, his only wisdom, light, and truth. From this fountain Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the others drew all the knowledge which they possessed of heavenly doctrine; from this fountain the prophets themselves drew all the celestial oracles which they spoke and wrote. <sup>131.</sup>

This approach leads Calvin immediately into a



typological method of exegesis, and it is in this, as we have seen, that he finds the answer to the problem of the difference between the Old and the New Testaments.

All the great spiritual elements of the Old Testament are regarded as embodying a hidden Christ. The Law was not given to draw people away from Christ, but to direct them to him while they waited for his coming; and in such things as the setting aside of the tribe of Levi, and in the attitude to the posterity of David which was developed by the prophets, "as in a twofold mirror Christ was exhibited to the view of his ancient people"<sup>132</sup>. There were sacraments under the Old Covenant which Calvin calls "sacraments of Christ". These are not only those which prefigure the two sacraments given in the New Testament but also others. A sacrament is defined as a sign and a divine<sup>133</sup> promise; and of such a nature were circumcision and the water which flowed from the rock, which Calvin regards as prefiguring Baptism and the Lord's Supper respectively. Of such a nature also was the tree of life to Adam, the rainbow to Noah, the Passover, the passage through the Red Sea, the Cloud, and the Manna<sup>134</sup> to the Jewish Fathers. These sacraments of the Old Testament had the same design as those of the New, namely, "to point and lead to Christ, or rather, as images to represent and make him known"<sup>135</sup>. There is

merely this difference. "The sacraments of the Mosaic Law announce Christ as afterwards to come; ours<sup>136</sup> announce him as already come". But sacraments they were; for God had,<sup>137</sup> "under a temporal benefit, manifested himself as Saviour".

The writers of the Psalms and the historical books, and the prophets who, with regard to doctrine, were merely interpreters of the Law, stood under the<sup>138</sup> same shadow and spoke in "types" and "figures". These men, despite the fact that they far exceeded their fellow men in the understanding of God's purpose, were also men of their time and, of necessity, had to undergo the same type of spiritual education; for, as Calvin says, "none of them possessed knowledge so clear as not to partake more or less of the obscurity<sup>139</sup> of the age".

Although Calvin felt free to apply the Principle of Type, yet he strongly denounced the use of the allegorical method of exegesis. The practice of expounding Scripture by allegory as it is carried out by "foolish and wicked men" reduces the Scripture to<sup>140</sup> a "nose of wax". Calvin shows the tragic consequences which came from this "torturing of Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense":

With such approbation the licentious system gradually attained such a height, that he who handled Scripture for his own amusement not only was suffered to pass unpunished, but even obtained the highest

applause. For many centuries no man was considered to be ingenious who had not the skill and daring necessary for changing into a variety of curious shapes the sacred word of God. This was undoubtedly a contrivance of Satan to undermine the authority of Scripture, and to draw away from the reading of it the true advantage.<sup>141</sup>

Scripture is a most rich fountain of wisdom, it is true; but Calvin denies that "its fertility consists in the various meanings which man at his pleasure may assign"<sup>142</sup>. In expounding 1 Corinthians 9:9 he denounces the "hair brained spirits" who turn everything into allegories: "they turn dogs into men, trees into angels, and turn all Scripture into a laughing stock".<sup>143</sup>

That there is allegorizing in Scripture he cannot and does not deny. St. Paul, in Galatians 4, expressly states that his words are allegorical, and Calvin sees some value in this: "Towards the close of the chapter his argument is enlivened by a beautiful allegory"<sup>144</sup>. Calvin declares that Paul uses the history in this way because, in itself, "it appeared to have no bearing on the question". Paul's purpose is not to show that Moses wrote the history with the intention that it should be turned into an allegory, but he points out in what way "the history may be made to answer the present subject"<sup>145</sup>. Though such was not the intention of the original writer, yet Calvin hastens to add that "it is not inconsistent with the true and literal meaning when

a comparison is drawn between the Church and the family of Abraham". He declares that Paul's allegory is justified because there is an allegory running through the whole of Scripture. "As in circumcision, in sacrifices, in the whole Levitical priesthood, there was an allegory, as there is an allegory at the present day in our sacraments, - so there was likewise  
146  
in the house of Abraham".

It is apparent that, in this section, Calvin is far from happy with the term allegory, encumbered as it was with so many distressing associations from the works of the Fathers and Scholastics. Time and time again he reiterates the basis of Scriptural exposition: "the natural and obvious meaning --- the natural meaning --- the true and literal meaning --- the literal meaning --- the natural meaning -", -all in a few sentences. A Scriptural writer has used a method of exegesis which he has come to detest, and he seeks to place rigid limits upon such a method. He is much happier when he describes these principal events as "types", and the history as containing a  
147  
figurative representation. The value of allegory is slight; for, although this example of Paul's is an illustration of great beauty, yet "viewed simply as an argument it would not be very powerful; but as a confirmation added to a most satisfactory chain of



reasoning it is not unworthy of attention". Allegories, Calvin declares, "ought to be extended no further than they are supported by the authority of Scripture; for they are far from affording of themselves a sufficient foundation for any doctrine".<sup>149</sup>

Although Calvin would not allow the examples of allegorical interpretation in the New Testament to be used as an authority for the extensive use of this principle, yet it is the Scriptural practice of Typology which is his authority for his extensive use of the principle of Type. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had clearly shown that, "irrespective of Christ, the ceremonies of the Law are futile and vain",<sup>150</sup> and had proceeded to give typological examples. If there had been any value in the Law, and if God's Covenant had had any meaning, then it followed that Christ was present under the Old Covenant. The typological method of biblical interpretation necessarily followed. Paul, by declaring that Christ was the end of the Law, had shown that "the Law in all its parts had a reference to Christ; and hence no one can rightly understand it who does not level at this mark".<sup>151</sup>

It may well be asked, How did Calvin avoid the use of the allegorical method after having given his full approval to the use of typology? It is apparent that

there is a common basis on which both methods rest. Both seek to show a deeper meaning in an event or narrative than that which appears on the surface, and in both the deeper meaning is dictated by a fuller knowledge of the purpose of the event. From the works of the Fathers it is clear that allegory is a freer method of exegesis, leading to more fanciful conclusions and running to greater extremes; but the boundary line between the two methods is very blurred.<sup>152</sup> When Calvin recognized that there was allegory in the whole of Scripture, he was obviously using the term in the general sense of a deeper meaning than that which is displayed on the surface. In this general sense typology is a form of allegory; but it is a restricted form. The typological approach has a closer connection with the historical actuality of the events which it interprets than the allegorical has. While the allegory may accept the historical truth of an event, it does not depend on it; but typology demands its historical actuality.

Calvin restricted his use of typology to theoretical statement and general examples, and, in practice, followed the example set by the New Testament in seeking Types in the Old Testament. He condemned those who "seek in every nail and minute things some sublime mystery" and who, "while they sought refinedly

to philosophize on things unknown to them, they foolishly blundered, and by their foolish trifling<sup>153</sup> made themselves ridiculous". Since the true symbols of religion are to be found only in Christ, he argues that,

we must take heed lest we, while seeking to adapt our inventions to Christ, transfigure him as the Papists do, so that he should not be at all like himself; for it does not belong to us to devise anything as we please, but to God alone it belongs to show us what to do; it is to be according to the pattern showed to us. 154

He pleads for the exercise of moderation, which is done only "if we seek to know what has been revealed to us<sup>155</sup> concerning Christ". Christ is the pattern; and the typological method of interpretation can only be applied to those cases in which the connection is quite obvious to the person who has fully understood the revelation of Christ in the New Testament. This precludes the studied investigation of the Old Testament for possible types.

Furthermore it is apparent that, for Calvin, there must be some real grounds for believing that the previous event, command, or promise, actually had some connection with the later one in the divine intention, that it was in reality a prefiguring. The use of Typology may be challenged, as it was in Calvin's day, by the claim that it is essentially unhistorical in so far as no connection between the two events can be

seen at the time of the first; that Moses, for example, did not realize that the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea was a prefiguration of Baptism, or that the manna and the water flowing from the rock prefigured the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. Calvin agrees that this is not mentioned explicitly in the Old Testament; but adds,

there is no doubt that God, by his Spirit, supplied the want of outward preaching, --- and yet not a word has come down to us as to this thing; but the Lord revealed to believers in that age, in the manner he thought fit, the secret which would otherwise have remained hid. 156.

With regard to circumcision, he seeks to show that the relation between the visible sign and the hidden meaning was realized by the Jews, in that the rite symbolized repentance and testified to the reconciliation between God and man, - spiritual truths which have been more clearly shown to us in Christ. Although there was not the clear knowledge of the sacraments of the Christian era, yet the spiritual meaning was understood to some extent by men of old.

Is it then unhistorical to adopt a typological method of exegesis? If history is regarded as a mere sequence of events and the historical record as a mere recounting of facts, then it is unhistorical; but if history is regarded as having a meaning and a purpose, which is understood, then it is legitimate to trace connections in the historical process and



to see the purpose expressed in various forms in its unfolding. For one who has seen the meaning of history revealed it is not unhistorical to find the expression of that meaning in any part of history. If it be admitted then that it is legitimate to seek the true meaning, although portrayed in different form, in other ages, the question then becomes, Is it true to the facts of the historical record to find this or that representation of the typical meaning of history in a particular case? This question can be answered only by treating each particular case in turn; but it has been shown from Calvin's statements that he was aware of the problems presented in it. His statement that God supplied the want of outward preaching by the instruction of his Spirit may seem weak to some; and yet it is obvious that some understanding of the true meaning, later to be revealed in Christ, must have been present in the Old Testament for the Hebrew understanding of God's purpose to have developed at all. Christ can be understood only against the background of Hebrew thought; and the terminology of the New Testament must be referred to the same background if it is to be understood. It is therefore truly historical and quite logical to seek for the beginnings of the later understanding of God's will and purpose in the Old Testament, and to regard these as portraying a Christ as yet to be revealed fully.

A typological interpretation in which the definitive Type is seen as Christ, the Son of God, the Davidic King, the Suffering Servant, and so on, is a theological interpretation; but it is not on that account unhistorical. Nevertheless there is some justification for the claim that in particular cases the aspects of Christ which are found in the pre-Christian era are untrue to the facts of history. Then the theological interpretation is forced, and a conflict is evident between history and theology. Calvin was aware of this danger, and sought to restrict the use of the typological method to general examples and indicated that he clearly understood that full understanding was not present in the prefiguration, which remained under the shadows. Yet, although Calvin's theoretical approach was sound, in the practical application he was occasionally carried beyond his own boundaries. Such an explanation as the following, which, although it is stated with an expression of doubt, is, by its inclusion, obviously regarded as worthy of a hearing, is elevating the theological interpretation at the expense of the historical. On the question of the use of the name Son of God in pre-Christian times, he says,

If the contention be merely about the word, Solomon, in speaking of the infinite sublimity of God, affirms his son to be incomprehensible as well as himself. "What is his name," says he, "and what is his Son's name if thou canst tell?"

I am aware that this testimony will not have sufficient weight with contentious persons, nor indeed do I lay much stress upon it, only that it fixes the charge of malicious cavil on those who deny that Christ is the Son of God any otherwise than because he became man. 158.

In general, however, Calvin remained within legitimate limits.

Nevertheless it must be added that Calvin's restriction on the use of Typology, and his complete rejection of allegorical interpretations, does not derive from his Doctrine of Scripture, but from his strong sense of the importance of historical truth. If the Holy Spirit, the author of Scripture, himself makes use of allegory in interpreting the Old Testament with complete disregard of the original literal meaning, this is surely sufficient authority for applying this exegetical principle more widely. If there is allegory in the whole of Scripture, which Calvin admits, and this Scripture is completely from God, it is surely not only legitimate but also necessary for an exegete to use this method of interpretation. It is actually in opposition to his Doctrine of Scripture that Calvin rejects the allegorical principle of exegesis. His vigorous and abusive repudiation of the allegorists may be taken, as Dakin observes in another context, as "a sure sign -- that he was not entirely comfortable in his

159  
 logic". Calvin realized that not only was the Christ  
 portrayed in the actual form of the Law a veiled  
 Christ but also the spiritual reality behind the  
 160  
 form was veiled. Even the most godly men of Old  
 Testament times were involved in the shadow and  
 obscurity common to their age, and the prophets  
 minister more to later ages than to their own, "for  
 in Christ only is the full exhibition of those things  
 161  
 of which God then presented but an obscure image".  
 Calvin saw that unless a judicious restraint was  
 placed upon the interpretation of the religious  
 meaning of the Old Testament men would be led to  
 even greater obscurity. It was actually his dislike  
 of the excesses to which the allegorical principle  
 had run in the history of dogma that forced him to  
 make this reservation which was not implied in his  
 original dogmatic thesis.

The principle of Accommodation means that the  
 doctrine given by God is delivered to different  
 historical periods in a form suited to the capacity  
 of those to whom it is addressed. Thus Scripture is  
 often to be seen as expressing in a figurative way  
 a meaning which must be derived from it. There is a  
 sense in which the words are mere symbols and the  
 true meaning must be sought behind the words  
 themselves. The mere written word may be known  
 without an understanding of the inner meaning; for



the meaning is not an object but a life; the letter must not be taken for the spirit.

Thus, in introducing his discussion of the Law in the Institutes, Calvin underlines the fact that it was directed to life, not merely in the outward form but also in inward and spiritual righteousness. Those who fail to see this are those who direct their attention to the Law and disregard the character of the Lawgiver. <sup>162</sup> The Lawgiver is spiritual and speaks to the soul as well as to the body.

There is always more in the requirements and prohibitions of the Law than is expressed in words. --- It is true that in almost all the commandments there are elliptical expressions and that, therefore, any man would make himself ridiculous by attempting to restrict the spirit of the Law to the strict letter of the words. <sup>163</sup>

This seeking for meaning behind the words must not be used to bring out any meaning that may be required. It must always be an endeavour to express the pure and genuine sense of the Lawgiver; and Calvin adopts the rule that the interpretation must always be "guided by the principle of the commandment - to consider in the case of each for what purpose it was <sup>164</sup> given".

Similarly a meaning, other than that which is merely verbal and superficial, is to be sought in whole passages of Scripture as well as in single words and sentences. Scripture is directed to man as man in

terms that the simplest may understand. It is necessary, therefore, that the spiritual truth be expressed in inferior forms. Calvin condemns the Anthropomorphites who imagine God to be corporeal because he is so described in Scripture.

--- who, even of the meanest capacity, understands not that God lisps, as it were, with us, just as nurses are accustomed to speak with infants. Wherefore such forms of expression do not clearly explain the nature of God, but accommodate the knowledge of him to our narrow capacity; to accomplish which the Scripture must necessarily descend far below the height of his majesty. 165.

*quod ut fiat longe infra ejus altitudinem descendere necesse est.*

So it is also that Scripture represents angels as having wings, because of "the slender capacity of  
166 our minds"; Paul, in speaking of God as our enemy and men as being under a curse, is using "modes of  
167 expression accommodated to our capacity"; Christ  
168 speaks "appropriately", and "according to the  
169 established order of his time"; and, in the sacraments, the Lord "accommodates himself to our capacity, condescending to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements, and in the flesh itself to present  
170 to us a mirror of spiritual blessings".

The extent of the use of this principle of Accommodation can be seen most clearly from Calvin's commentary on the opening chapters of Genesis. When Moses wrote that "the evening and the morning were the first day", he was not laying down a rule that a

day should be reckoned as beginning in the evening,  
 but he "accommodated his discourse to the received  
 171 custom". Indeed the whole of this section is to be  
 regarded as a great accommodation to the scientific  
 knowledge of the people of that time. It is apparent  
 that in later ages, when scientific knowledge has  
 greatly increased, there will be many points in the  
 pictures which Moses draws which will be outdated.  
 For example, by Calvin's time, the astronomers had  
 172 shown, "by conclusive reasons", that the star of  
 Saturn was actually greater than the moon, whereas  
 Moses spoke of the sun and the moon as the two great  
 lights. But Moses was not speaking as a scientist.  
 Calvin repeatedly emphasises that Moses is not to  
 be regarded as producing a book of natural philosophy  
 when he gave this account of the creation of the  
 world.

It must be remembered that Moses does not  
 speak with philosophic acuteness on occult  
 mysteries, but relates those things which  
 are everywhere observed, even by the  
 uncultivated, and are in common use. 173.

It is well again here to repeat what I  
 have said before, that it is not here  
 philosophically discussed how great is the  
 sun in the heavens --. For Moses addresses  
 himself to our senses that the knowledge  
 of the gifts of God which we enjoy may not  
 glide away. 174.

I have said that Moses does not subtly  
 descant, as a philosopher, on the secrets of  
 nature, as may be seen in these words. 175.

Moses wrote in popular style things which, without instruction, all ordinary persons endowed with common sense are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labour whatever the capacity of the human mind can comprehend. 176.

Calvin sees no conflict between the discoveries of science and the writings of Moses, for Moses was using terms which could be understood by the ordinary people of his day. Yet although, of necessity, he had to express himself in this way, he should still be "listened to as our teacher who would transport us with admiration of God through the consideration of his works"<sup>177</sup>. For his main interest is not in the structure of nature but in its meaning for men; his writings are not scientific but religious statements; he writes as a "theologian" who had respect "for us" <sup>178</sup> rather than the stars".

In one sense the principle of Accommodation agrees well with Calvin's main dogmatic thesis concerning Scripture, that the Scriptures have come from God and contain no element of human fallibility. The words and teaching contained in Scripture can be regarded as coming directly from God and all that has become irrelevant with the passage of time can be classified as the accommodation of the Divine to the historical situation. This appears to leave Calvin quite free to apply historical critical methods; indeed he saw that these methods must be



used if the permanent elements of the divine revelation in time are to be understood. Yet there is an obvious tension between these two principles of exegesis. The principle of Divine Accommodation is a theoretical principle which Calvin applies to explain the presence of elements of temporality in the eternal message of God. The Scriptures are thus retained in their high position. But it must be remembered that it is a theoretical principle. The accommodation is made by God on the divine side of reality and not by man on the human side, even though that man be a prophet of one of the Fathers. As far as practical exegesis is concerned, however, this principle has no immediate relevance; for, even if the principle of Accommodation is accepted, the important question for the student of Scripture is, What parts of Scripture are to be regarded as Accommodation, and by what principles are they to be discovered? The practical principles which can be applied from the human side are those of doctrinal comparison and historic criticism.

In the realm of doctrine, as we have seen, Calvin regards the full revelation given in Christ as normative, and any factors in the old dispensation which are at variance with this can be classified as the accommodation of the divine message of salvation to the circumstance of the time. Doctrinal comparison

presents Calvin with no difficulties. With the definitive doctrine of Paul and the other New Testament writers as his standard he is able to assess the value of Old Testament doctrine. In the realm of doctrine, therefore, the Scripture is its own standard. The final revelation in Christ is the norm by which the exegete determines what elements are to be regarded as Divine Accommodation. But in other fields, in which the Scriptures do not provide a standard of judgement, Calvin is ready to accept the assured results of human investigation. Thus he praises the labours of astronomers and accepts their conclusions in preference to the scientific statements of Moses.

Wherefore ingenious men are to be honoured who have expended useful labour on this subject, so they who have leisure and capacity ought not to neglect this kind of exercise. Nor did Moses truly wish to withdraw us from this pursuit in omitting such things as are peculiar to the art. 179.

The primitive scientific formulations of Moses are rejected as accommodation to a primitive age; but his writings are retained because, although their science is primitive, they reveal to us as in a mirror the  
180  
one God, the Creator of the world.

Calvin must be applauded for his clear-sighted assessment of the right of scientific specialists to speak authoritatively in their own field; but by his application of the principle of Accommodation

he has dealt a serious blow to his original dogmatic thesis. If all that can be shown to be Accommodation in Scripture is at best but partially true, then the Scripture cannot be given the same reverence as would be given to God who is eternal truth. Although Calvin may claim that the theory of Divine Accommodation in Scripture is consistent with his declaration that Scripture has proceeded from God alone and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it, yet, by his practice, he admits that there are many places in Scripture where the truth has been distorted because of the frailty of human understanding and that these must be examined critically before the truth will shine forth clearly. It is only by a clear understanding of the essence of Scripture and by a grasp of the assured results of human investigation that a man can sift those elements which bear the stamp of temporality from the eternal message.

Furthermore it must be noted that when Calvin reaches the point in his exegesis where he cites the principle of Divine Accommodation, he has already applied historical principles of exegesis in which the Scriptures are not treated as writings which have come directly from God, but as the product of men who were involved "in the obscurity of the age". The practical approach to Scripture which he adopts

does not presuppose that they are absolutely pure and divine, but that they are produced by men whose outlook was partly determined by their historical environment. We must therefore regard his theory of Divine Accommodation as an ingenious theory which, while appearing to support his claim that Scripture must be accepted in its totality as if God himself had given utterance to it, nevertheless undermines the main implication of that thesis, because it is applied to those parts of Scripture which do not carry the absolute authority of divine truth.

#### The Conflict between Calvin's Principles of Exegesis.

As is to be expected Calvin frequently finds himself in a difficult position in endeavouring to apply his theses that, on the one hand, the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture and therefore Scripture has nothing belonging to man mixed with it, and, on the other, that the chief task of the exegete is to lay open the mind of the writer whom he undertakes to explain. Especially is this so with regard to the quotations of the Old Testament which are made by New Testament writers. Here his theological presuppositions are often in direct conflict with his strong sense of historical accuracy. If the Scriptures are composed under the direct dictation of the Holy Spirit one would expect to find accuracy



in quotation and conformity in meaning. But often this is not the case. In Hebrews 2:7, where the writer quotes from Psalm 2, the meaning of the words in their original context is disregarded. Calvin is unhappy in commenting on this passage and declares that "it was not the Apostle's design to give an exact explanation of the words". The words are "verbal allusions" which "embellish" and act as "ornaments". The writer did not intend to overthrow or distort the meaning of David, but calls us to consider "the abasement of Christ, which appeared for a short time, and then the glory with which he ~~is~~ perpetually crowned; and this he does more by alluding to expressions than by explaining what David <sup>181</sup> understood". Yet one cannot help remarking that one would not expect the Holy Spirit to confuse his divine meaning with mere embellishments.

When the New Testament writers use quotations from the Old Testament as proof texts the problem must be taken more seriously. Calvin's position, determined by his doctrine of Scripture, is as follows:

It ought always to be observed that, whenever any proof from Scripture is quoted by the Apostles, though they do not translate word for word, and sometimes depart widely from the language, yet it is applied correctly and appropriately to the subject. Let the reader always consider the purpose for which passages of Scripture are brought forward by the Evangelists, so as not to stick too closely to the particular words, but to be satisfied with this, that the Evangelists

never torture Scripture into a different meaning, but apply it correctly in its native meaning. 182

That this is not as simple as it appears at first sight is shown from his commentary on Matthew 2:15, (Hosea 11:1,). When Calvin comments on the passage in Hosea he declares that those "who are not well versed in Scripture confidently apply this place to Christ; yet the context is opposed to this" In their native meaning the words of Hosea refer to the Exodus; but when Matthew applies them to Christ he does not "torture" them, but skilfully applies them to the matter in hand.

The words of the prophet impart that the nation was rescued from Egypt as from a deep whirlpool of death. Now what was the redemption brought by Christ, but a resurrection from the dead and the commencement of a new life. The light of salvation had almost been extinguished when God begat the Church anew in the person of Christ. Then did the Church come out of Egypt in its head, as the whole body had been formerly brought out. 184.

Calvin would maintain that Matthew had fully understood the meaning of the passage as it was originally given, but that, having seen the fuller revelation of God's purpose, he was able to interpret the event more fully by applying the principle of Type.

There is a tension evident here between historical and theological exegesis which can easily develop into an inconsistency. Calvin will not allow the

New Testament interpretation of an Old Testament passage to define the meaning of that passage in its original context; yet he regards both as true. That there are many such examples to be found in his writings shows how strong was his sense of the importance of historical accuracy and how frequently he was forced to repudiate his dogmatic view of Scripture.

This tension is seen most clearly perhaps in Calvin's comment on 1 Corinthians 2:9, (Isaiah 64:4),. He notices two difficulties with regard to this quotation by Paul. First, that the words Paul uses are not the same as those in Isaiah; second, that he seems to use the quotation for quite a different purpose from that intended by Isaiah. He overcomes the first difficulty by declaring that the apostles were not interested so much in the words as the meaning and that Paul was using the Greek translation,<sup>185</sup> and the second by showing that both writers were dealing with the same subject - the wonderful goodness of God. Isaiah contemplated his benefits bestowed upon people in ancient times, and Paul<sup>186</sup> considered the wonder of his gift in Christ. In the commentary on Isaiah Calvin applies the simple reasoning of grammatical and historical comparison; but in 1 Corinthians he claims that the meaning

given by Paul must be taken as a guide to an understanding of Isaiah's meaning.

For where shall we find a surer or more faithful interpreter than the Spirit of God of this authoritative declaration which he himself dictated to Isaiah - in the exposition which he has furnished by the mouth of Paul. 187

This may appear to dispense with the reasoned argument in the commentary on Isaiah in preference of a theological hypothesis and to have made a distinct break between the two methods of exegesis; yet it is apparent that Calvin did not recognize it as such. In the Commentary on Corinthians this statement occurs in the middle of a long passage which includes suggested translations of Isaiah and discussions on the grammatical structure and historical sense, and in the exegesis which follows Calvin twice indicates that others may prefer another interpretation which he does not discard. His exegesis is not ultimate and final; but he states humbly, "I have, however, already intimated which  
188  
interpretation I prefer". Apparently all that Calvin means by his dogmatic statement is that, where there is some uncertainty as to the meaning of an Old Testament passage, the New Testament interpreter, as an inspired writer, can be regarded as understanding the true sense. When the different historical contexts are understood the later interpretation



can be applied to the earlier, mutatis mutandis, to give the true meaning.

From the preceding investigations of Calvin's exegetical methods it is clear that many limiting footnotes must be added to his dogmatic thesis that the Scriptures demand the same reverence as God himself because they have proceeded from him alone and have nothing belonging to man mixed with them. From Calvin's general attitude to the text of Scripture we see that the student of Scripture must be critically aware of the errors which have developed due to faulty transmission of the text; by his careful regard of grammar and the relation of passage to context he shows that the words of Scripture are to be regarded as divine words only if they are treated with the recognized principles of human composition; and by his relegation of all that has been conditioned by historic circumstance to a secondary place he has restricted the divine elements in Scripture to those which have not been dated by the passage of time. In all his exegetical endeavours he has regarded the Scriptures as human documents which have been produced in historic settings and subject to the limitations of human expression and understanding. The high doctrine of Divine Accommodation is a cloak which but

partially shrouds the discontinuity between his dogmatic thesis and his practical exegesis. Where open conflict occurs between these two, as in 1 Corinthians 2:9, although he continues to assert his main doctrine of Scripture, it is clear that it has little or no meaning. If the Spirit of God has furnished an exposition of the passage in Isaiah by the mouth of Paul, there is surely no need for historic analysis. The fact that Calvin accepts Paul's exposition out of a number of others which he does not reject dogmatically shows how little meaning his doctrine of Scripture has at this point.

#### Calvin's Practical Solution of the Hermeneutical Problem.

We have seen that there are two main lines followed by Calvin in his approach to Scripture. The one is theological; the other is historical and critical. The former asserts that the Scripture is entirely divine; the latter regards the Scriptures as historic documents which must be approached critically so that the natural meaning must be understood. There is an obvious tension between these two lines of approach; and the fact that Calvin formulates both in an extreme form means that, from time to time, he is forced to repudiate one or other of these principles. Calvin lived at a difficult time.

The historical principle of interpretation had proved of great value in shedding new light upon the message of Scripture; but it needed direction. The theological principle of interpretation, which had provided the mediaeval schema, had become dated; and yet it provided one way of obtaining stability in a time of uncertainty. Calvin brought these two principles into uneasy union. He claimed that the Scriptures were divine and a unity, and asserted the need to preserve the natural sense of each writer. But in practice he did not apply the full implications of his assertion of divinity, for his historical sense limited the force of his theological presuppositions; nor did he hold to the purely natural sense, for his theological thought infiltrated into his historical and grammatical analysis. We must regard his high doctrine of Scripture as an attempt to gain a certain authority to which all else must be subject; but it is an extreme doctrine which he himself repudiates in his practical exegesis. We must regard his statement that almost the only task of the exegete is "to lay open the mind of the writer whom he undertakes to explain" as a formulation which was influenced by the Renaissance approach to the texts of antiquity, but which is transformed greatly in its practical application by Calvin's theological presuppositions.

Thus it is useless to hold aloft the passage in Calvin's dedicatory epistle to Simon Grynaeus as if it restricted all his endeavours to historical exegesis, which alone can be called "the Reformation principle of exegesis"<sup>189</sup>; for Calvin soon follows this with the declaration that "when anyone understands this Epistle (Romans), he has a passage opened to him<sup>190</sup> to the understanding of the whole of Scripture". Even if his first statement be considered as limiting, this immediately introduces the other side. It may be true to say that the grammatico-historical approach was the new development which differentiated Reformation exegesis from that which preceded it, but it is not necessary, because of this, to regard the theological as some residual remnant of an unlightened<sup>en</sup> past. Rather we see that the historical and the theological principles are together the definitive elements of Calvin's exegetical method.

If we neglect for the moment the extreme formulation which Calvin gave to his doctrine of Scripture, a doctrine which involves him in difficulties and which he repudiates in his exegesis, and regard the principles which he generally applies, - a modified theological principle united with a sound historical sense, - we may say that Calvin's solution of the hermeneutical problem is to see a divine purpose running through the whole of Scripture to which all



else must be related. There is a central theme which unifies; a central light which illuminates the whole. The doctrine of the Gospel, that God himself has sought fallen man and revealed the way of salvation, is seen to be the very essence of Scripture. All else that there is in Scripture is but the form which has embodied this. The text must be examined to ensure that, as far as possible, errors do not distort the expression of the purpose; the grammatical and historical contexts must be understood in order that the true doctrine may be grasped; but the exegete always has one aim - to bring out the purpose of God expressed in the Scripture. The Sacred History is still the story of events in time; but it is a story that is laden with meaning - a meaning which is shown clearly in Christ. In him history and theology unite. From the point of reference of the Cross the facts of history, seemingly meaningless on their own plane, are projected on to a plane which gives them meaning and shows their reality in God's purpose. The facts of history are important; for without them there would be no form to express the meaning and the purpose. But once the purpose has been understood it stands out as definitive and all-embracing. The tension between historical and theological exegesis still remains, but it is transferred to be part of the greater problem - the paradox of the human and divine in Christ.

The Doctrine contained in Scripture.

Calvin's repeated emphasis on meaning shows clearly where his true interest in Scripture lies; it is in doctrine. Although the ceremonies of the Law had no further meaning or purpose after Christ came, yet the <sup>191</sup> "doctrine of the Law remains --- inviolable". Although the prophets "were not partakers of the light which is exhibited to us", because they had but "a limited knowledge of the grace brought by Christ", yet a "high praise is given to their doctrine, for it was <sup>192</sup> the testimony of the Holy Spirit". Although the disciples were ignorant when the Lord promised that the Spirit would lead them into all truth, yet, when they came to write, they were so instructed by the Spirit that there was nothing which "hindered them from comprising and leaving on record in those <sup>193</sup> writings a perfect system of evangelical doctrine". The Law with its childlike nature and incompleteness has now been both superseded and fulfilled; the light which dimly shone on the prophets is now shining in its full splendour and has driven away the obscurity and the shadows; but the doctrine stands even firmer, because it has been republished in Christ and reexpressed within the apostolic writings. When Calvin speaks of Scripture in high and exalted terms it is the doctrine which is contained in it which he has

primarily in mind. Thus a new emphasis is seen in his words,

the Scripture exhibits the plainest evidences that it is God who speaks in it, which manifests its doctrine to be divine. 194.

The authority of the doctrine which is found in Scripture is the authority of God himself. When Christ gave the disciples power to remit or to retain sins he also breathed upon them, which Calvin regards as a sign that he, who was the author of their doctrine, was in heaven "to confirm the truth of the doctrine which he had delivered unto them", and also to assure their hearers "that the doctrine of the apostles was not the word of the apostles but of God himself; not a voice issuing from the earth but descended from  
195  
heaven". Of such a divine nature is the doctrine that Calvin equates the rejection of it with the sin against the Holy Spirit. Such blasphemers were those who strove to resist the Spirit who spoke by Stephen; for they were "infuriated by a malignant impiety against God, that is, against the doctrine  
196  
which they knew to be from God". Doctrine is of vital importance for the Church, for the "saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the Church"; and also for the  
197  
individual, for "the doctrine of the Gospel is the incorruptible seed to regenerate those who are  
198  
capable of understanding it!"

What is the form of this factor in Scripture which Calvin calls its doctrine? When he uses the phrase "the doctrine of Scripture" in a particular case does he have the words of a text or a group of texts in mind, or is it something more intangible? Throughout his works it is clear that he formulates doctrine on the basic authority of the broad scope of Scripture. Although he deals with particular texts extensively in particular situations yet his final appeal is to Scripture as a whole. Thus with reference to his doctrine of the Lord's Supper he says, "It is certain that the doctrine we advance is in all respects in perfect harmony with Scripture"; in propounding his doctrine of forgiveness, he claims that it is the "most consistent with the truth of Scripture"; and in commenting on Acts 15:20 he says, "As concerning the judgement of God, the knowledge thereof must be sought out of the continual doctrine of Scripture". The touchstone of doctrinal formulations is not mere texts but the broad stream of evangelical doctrine which flows through Scripture. He reproves those who seek to establish justification by works from the apostolic exhortations which are given to "furnish the man of God unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17). The theologian must refer his conclusions to a wider background and he will see that the apostles "deduce their principal exhortations from this consideration, that our salvation



depends not on any merit of ours but merely on the  
 202  
 mercy of God". The argument from scriptural  
 exhortations is not the "only argument" nor the  
 "principal one", and also "we ought not to begin with  
 it", for the broad stream of doctrine supports  
 justification by faith.

The doctrine contained in Scripture is not  
 formulated in clear and distinct doctrinal formulae  
 and it is the task of the theologian to express  
 what is implied in the whole of Scripture. This does  
 not involve merely repeating the words, but expressing  
 the meaning behind the words. In his discussion on  
 the use of the word Person in the doctrine of the  
 Trinity, Calvin opposes those who claim that it  
 should be excluded because it is not found explicitly  
 in Scripture.

If they call every word exotic, which  
 cannot be found in Scripture in so many  
 syllables, they impose on us a law which  
 is very unreasonable, and which condemns  
 all interpretation, but what is composed  
 of detached texts of Scripture connected  
 together. ----  
 But when it has been proved that the Church  
 was absolutely necessitated to use the  
 terms Trinity and Person, if any then  
 censure the novelty of the words, may he  
 not be justly considered as offended at  
 the light of truth? 203

On this basis Calvin defends his doctrine that "a  
 man is justified by faith only". The "only" may not  
 be used explicitly in Scripture but he claims that  
 it is everywhere implied; for Scripture affirms "that

Christ is the sole author of our righteousness and life, and that this blessing of righteousness is<sup>204</sup> enjoyed by faith alone". When he opposes the use of the term "merit", he remarks that it is not found in Scripture and should not have been introduced; but his main argument is that the term implies something which is absolutely opposed to the doctrine of<sup>205</sup> Scripture.

Calvin's method of establishing doctrine is one of statement, explanation, and authentication by the use of texts whose true meaning is shown; then follows a counter-argument which may have been propounded by the Papists or the Anabaptists on the basis of Scripture; this is refuted by an explanation of the texts on which they base their opposition, usually by an appeal to other parts of Scripture which bring out the true meaning and show how they are related to the subject under discussion; then Calvin, having shown that any opposition rests on a false interpretation, can reassert his conclusion as being in harmony with Scripture. Always the argument proceeds from statement to exposition, from exposition to statement, from false meaning to true meaning, from text to context, from word to inner truth, from part to whole, and always with the purpose of establishing the true doctrine which is contained in Scripture. We are led step by step through

carefully formulated and logical arguments, and always the emphasis is on meaning. Take, for example, his <sup>his definition of</sup> defence of Justification which is the "principal hinge by which religion is supported". To show that it is scriptural he takes a few texts out of many. They are testimonies, but it is their meaning which shows their true value.

(He quotes Luke and Christ) -- "To justify God", in the former passage, does not signify -----; nor, in the latter passage, does the justifying of wisdom denote -----; but both passages imply -----. Again, when Christ reprehends the Pharisees for "justifying themselves", he does not mean that ----, but that ----. (He quotes from Kings). And it appears from the context that this word, even in translation, cannot be understood in any other than a relative sense, and that it does not denote the real character. But with respect to the present subject, where Paul says ----, what can we understand but that ----? Again, when he says that, ----, what can be the meaning but that ----? He speaks more plainly in the conclusion when he thus exclaims: -----. For it is just as if he said, ----. Justification therefore is ----.

206.

Doctrine, for Calvin, is the quintessence of the Scripture. His whole purpose in the Institutes is "to comprehend a compendious summary of evangelical <sup>207</sup> doctrine", that "no one will find any difficulty in determining what ought to be the principal objects of his research in the Scripture, and to what end he ought to refer anything it contains". The doctrine <sup>208</sup> contained in Scripture is not such a tangible entity that an inquirer can point with his finger to a

single word or text and claim that it in itself is doctrine and that it in itself is divine. The doctrine is there behind the words, contained in the inner sense, and it can be declared to be divine doctrine only after its relationship with the rest of Scripture has been established.

Here again we see that Calvin has withdrawn somewhat from the commanding position set down in his doctrine of Scripture. The words and texts of Scripture are transformed into doctrine, propositional truths about God, which are divine. The Scripture is from the mouth of God in so far as the sum of its doctrine is divine. It is the doctrine contained in Scripture, carefully gathered from the whole of Scripture, which carries the unmistakable sounds of God's voice. We see also how closely Calvin stood to the orthodox conviction that the special revelation given by God was in the form of "revealed truths". Dr. Temple's assertion, that the essence of revelation "is intercourse of mind and event, not the communication of doctrine distilled  
209  
from that intercourse", would not have been appreciated by Calvin. Sassaure is certainly in a truly Calvinistic tradition when he writes, "Revelation --- is expressed in clear and definite words. It is 'verbal'."; and "A God Revealed" is the "author of fixed and normative  
210  
doctrines". Although Reformation developments could have led to a new discussion concerning the nature of



revelation, Calvin's emphasis on the divine nature of the doctrine which he drew from Scripture shows how little change the Reformation had actually brought to the orthodox attitude at this point.

### The Inspiration of Scripture.

During the first half of this century there has been heated controversy about Calvin's view of the inspiration of Scripture. As this period itself has been a time of vigorously asserted thesis and counter-thesis concerning this question it is not surprising that theologians of both sides should have endeavoured to determine the attitude of this great Reformer. In view of his approach to Scripture which we have discussed it is understandable that both parties have had some success in claiming him as the authority for their particular point of view.

Warfield claims that Calvin holds both "verbal<sup>211</sup> inspiration" and "the inerrancy of Scripture", and Davies declares that he "committed himself to a<sup>212</sup> completely verbal and mechanical theory of inspiration". In both cases the terms are applied with the connotations used by Fundamentalist groups of this period, and Davies, in explaining Calvin's criticisms of the text, actually equates him with a Fundamentalist of the present day who uses the notion of textual<sup>213</sup> corruption.

In opposition to this Pannier asserts that "Calvin has not written a single word which may be appealed to<sup>214</sup> in favour of literal inspiration", and Doumergue seeks to show that "Calvin has no mechanical, literal, and<sup>215</sup> verbal theory of inspiration. He proceeds to show that Calvin finds inconsistencies in Scripture such as a liberal theologian would find today. Then Davies produces the conservative reply: "But even if we admit the validity of all Doumergue's arguments, they do little to diminish the impression which Calvin gives throughout his writings that he regarded the Bible as having come down in every detail from God out of<sup>216</sup> heaven". He regards the recognition of errors by Calvin as but "drops in a bucket" which "indicate at most that he was very occasionally in a long career<sup>217</sup> untrue to one of his most dearly cherished ideas".

Such a variety of opinion must make us pause before coming to any definite conclusion concerning a doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture in Calvin's thought. Furthermore the warning which Barth gives concerning the Reformer's relationship with Roman Catholicism and Neo-Protestantism could well be applied to this question. He declares that,

we are not in a position today to repeat the statements of Luther and Calvin without at the same time making them more pointed than they themselves did.   218

We may say that Calvin was not concerned with developing an explicit doctrine of inspiration.

At the very point where he declares that the Scripture "obtains the same credit and authority with believers, when they are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they<sup>219</sup> heard the very words pronounced by God himself", at this point where he could well have defined a doctrine of inspiration, he turns aside from it. He indicates that the whole problem raised here is a very complex one and seeks the pardon of his readers for carrying on with the plan of his work rather than in dealing with this topic to the extent which it required. This is a sure sign that the problem was not of polemical importance in his day; for whenever a controversial question arose Calvin stated his case most meticulously. This fact assures us that Calvin, in his theological approach to Scripture, remains in the orthodox fold. His assertion that the Spirit "dictated" to the scriptural writers was not a revolutionary enunciation, but was in keeping with the general approach to Scripture at that time. The term dictate, used metaphorically, was in current use in the theological<sup>220</sup> writings of the age.

Nevertheless the fact that Calvin uses such phrases as the "dictation of the Holy Spirit", and describes the apostles as "scribes" who wrote what they had received "out of the mouth of the Lord", indicates that there is implied in Calvin's dogmatic statements a doctrine of "verbal inspiration". To define this implied

doctrine as "one of his most dearly cherished ideas" is, however, an unhistorical assessment of the situation. Ideas become dearly cherished only when strongly challenged, and it is in the doctrine of faith and not in that of scriptural inspiration that we must look for beliefs of Calvin which can be described in this way. It is perhaps only in this era that we can define the belief in verbal inspiration as a "dearly cherished idea", for in this age the controversy concerning the inspiration of Scripture has risen to an unprecedented level.

In Calvin's practical exegesis, however, we have noticed that, alongside his orthodoxy, there runs an unorthodox train of thought. It is a well developed historical and critical approach to Scripture which sometimes bows before his theological presuppositions, but which more often triumphs over them reducing the mean meaning of his theological statements to but a fraction of their normal meaning. The fact that the Spirit has dictated an interpretation of an Old Testament passage merely leads Calvin to offer a<sup>221</sup> tentatively expressed preference; and the phrase "out of the mouth of the Lord" is declared to be<sup>222</sup> expressive merely of a conformity of doctrine.

It is easy to see how theologians, immersed in the recent conflict, could separate out Calvin's theological formulations, state them to be definitive, and, regarding



his second approach to Scripture as but an unfortunate lapse, could claim that he was an ardent supporter of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. It is equally easy to understand how protagonists of the opposing point of view, by interpreting his dogmatic statements in the light of his exegetical practice, could claim him as their supporter. He stands between them on the field, moving now to this side now to that, at a time before the real battle has begun. There are skirmishes, to be sure, but the opposing forces have not yet taken up their positions; for neither the field of battle nor the quarrel has as yet been clearly defined. In another metaphor, Calvin can be regarded as the precursor of both parties. There is obviously something in his writings which led naturally to the rigid views of inspiration which developed;<sup>223</sup> but there is also the impulse which led to a more critical approach<sup>224</sup> to Scripture. Hunter sums up the conflict in Calvin's approach to Scripture thus:

Calvin's doctrine of Scripture was really a hypothesis necessitated by the exigencies of the situation, a presupposition requisite to the stability of his whole theological system, the Creed, and the Church. He came to Scripture with the doctrine rather than drew it from Scripture, though he discovered therein assertions which substantiated his view to his own satisfaction. The Commentaries afford abundant evidence of the embarrassments into which he was driven by his theory. Its vindication in detail demanded an amazing amount of strenuous ingenuity, of whose disingenuousness he seems to be as conscious at times as of its

unconvincingness. One may say that never did the idea of verbal inspiration of the Scriptures receive such emphatic refutation as at the hands of this vehement champion, whose frequent transparent evasions, jugglings, and violences are in themselves a confession of its futility. 225.

This statement, by classifying Calvin as an ardent supporter of verbal inspiration, throws into clear relief the conflict inherent in his system. We, having accepted the two approaches to Scripture as together defining Calvin's attitude, cannot express the conflict in such violent terms. We shall classify him neither as a Fundamentalist nor as a non-Fundamentalist. In one sense he was neither and in another he was both. With regard to the doctrine of verbal inspiration which is implied in his doctrine of Scripture we must recognize that it was not held in such a self-conscious way as it has been in the modern period. This is the reason why Calvin could use the two principles of exegesis which, because of the development of both since Calvin's time, we now see to be conflicting. Rather we shall classify him as being both Orthodox and a leader of the Reformation. There is a loosely-held, and not clearly-formulated, doctrine of verbal inspiration implied in his dogmatics which he adopted from the orthodoxy of his day, and alongside this there exists a critical and historical approach which, in the extent to which it was applied, was a new development of the Reformation.

Nevertheless, for the purpose of this thesis, it must be noted that his assertion of the authority of Scripture rested completely upon his orthodox formulations. Dr. Dodd has expressed the authority of Scripture which is recognized by the critical approach thus:

In almost all parts of the Bible we can feel ourselves in touch with religious personalities, some of them displaying exceptional inspiration, all of them men of insight and sincerity. They write out of their experience of God in the soul, or of God's dealings in what happened to them and their people. Because they were "men of God", their experience is a valid representation of divine reality. 226

Calvin's critical and historical approach to Scripture implied this; but he never made it explicit. Rather the Scripture was regarded as divine because it had come from the mouth of God, and in this way its authority was assured. But, although he appears to have recognized it but seldom, each time he allowed his historical sense to override his theological presuppositions, each time he relegated a passage of Scripture to an unimportant place even though he classified it as Divine Accommodation, each time he rejected a Scriptural example, he was cutting at the foundations of his structure of authority.

It may well be asked why Calvin asserted the orthodox position so strongly when the Reformation would seem to have tended to a more complete disregard

of that particular standpoint. First, it must be noted again that the Reformers had never fully dispensed with the orthodox view of Scripture. Luther allowed himself much more freedom than Calvin in his treatment of Scripture, but he was from time to time <sup>227</sup> extremely orthodox. Thus it was easy for Calvin to make use of the orthodox position. Second, and more important, is the fact that Calvin saw the need for some recognized authority in the reforming movement. Since the Reformation had developed a new understanding of the Scripture and had rejected orthodox ecclesiastical authority it was impossible for him to do otherwise than find his authority in the Scripture. He asserted strongly the orthodox view of Scripture and established his authority. Tactically he was successful, and the Reformation Church developed. But actually, because he bequeathed to this Church an orthodox authoritarian view of Scripture whose formulations became even more hardened, he failed to perpetuate the critical and historical principles of exegesis which had been vital to the early development of the Reformation and which he had been able to include in his thought.



CHAPTER IV.The Word of God.

At the beginning of the Reformation the idea of revelation underwent a change. That there was such a thing as revelation had, of course, been a fundamental premiss of all Christian thinkers. Even St. Thomas who had given a very large place to the powers of the human reason to form conclusions about God and to reach some type of happiness by the use of the speculative intellect was certain that revelation was necessary to enable man to reach the supreme<sup>1</sup> happiness, the vision of God. Although this perfect<sup>2</sup> happiness cannot be attained completely in this life, man is aided on the way by the revelation of God in Holy Writ. It is by this means that man receives further knowledge of God and an understanding of true virtue, especially the theological virtues which, by<sup>3</sup> becoming habits, enable him to draw nearer to perfection. The Holy Scriptures, in all their parts a revelation of God, were the main gratia gratis data which led men to have faith. But faith was of a lower order than charity; and only by the will adhering to the revealed truth, which was brought about by gratia gratum faciens - a free act of God's love that made man acceptable to God - that man entered into the higher realm of charity. This final grace, infused into man by the

sacraments, restored the donum superadditum and enabled human nature to work meritorious work unto righteousness. This was the basis of mediaeval sacramentalism. The revelation in the Scriptures, which was regarded as a system of divine truth beyond the reach of man's natural reason, tended to be regarded in practice as but a stepping stone to the vision of God. The sacraments which infused a higher type of grace into man took a more important place than the scriptural revelation.

In a broad sense the Reformers brought a change of emphasis only to this mediaeval system of theological thought. Whereas St. Thomas gave predominant emphasis to the end, the vision of God, the Reformers emphasised the means. But in another sense this brought in a new idea of revelation. Of Luther, Lilley writes:

His own experience had taught him that God spoke directly in His Word to the heart of the believer. That, of course, was the experience also of an Augustine, a Francis of Assisi, and many another Christian soul before and after him. But Luther was not content to take it as a perfectly natural subjective experience of the individual believer. With the impulsive self-confidence which characterised him, he proceeded to erect it into an objective criterion of Revelation. 4.

Luther reacted strongly against the sacramental system of Penance and the doctrine that man, in his own power, was capable of good works, - a doctrine which had been fostered more by the Franciscans with their

conception of meritum de congruo rather than by the Dominicans. And, in his reaction, he turned aside from the whole sacramental structure of mediaeval religion. The Word of God, God speaking to the individual soul, was all that was necessary to bring man to the faith by which he was justified. By his new understanding of the justitia Dei of Romans 1:17, he replaced sacramentalism with personalism. God, revealing himself in a personal way, brought salvation to the sinner who had faith in his mercy.

To a degree, this discovery of Luther's had its roots in the Occamist doctrine of the "non-imputation of sin" through which the classical habitus doctrine had been questioned long before Luther. But since, in Occam's thought, this doctrine of non-imputation had been connected with mediaeval sacramentalism and had the fatal addition that man himself must work "contrition", its effect as a criticism of the habitus doctrine was very little. This artificial connection between the "non-imputation of sin" and mediaeval sacramentalism was sundered by Luther when he established "non-imputation" on its own basis, that is, God's mercy and man's faith, communicated and received by God's own Word. With this he had definitely left the mediaeval basis of religion by lifting it from its sacramental to a personal level. And although this tendency from sacramentalism to personalism had been

one of the motivating factors of fourteenth century mysticism, this mysticism had been based on the capacities of man to no less a degree than Occam's via moderna and thus had been unable to break through the limitations of mediaeval religion. It was Luther who, for the first time since Augustine, pronounced the absoluteness of man's sin and the absoluteness of divine mercy.

The Word of God now assumed a dominant position in theological thought. It alone was the means whereby God spoke to the human heart and brought about the faith which saved. Revelation was no longer a system of divine truth which could be viewed objectively and which had to be supplemented by the grace infused by the sacraments, but God himself speaking to the human soul in its sinfulness. A new dynamic quality was attributed to the Word, and he, as a person, was seen to possess all the gracious energy of God. All that the Middle Ages had attributed to the Word and the sacramental system together was now seen to be the work of the Word alone. Luther did not develop the implications of this new conception of revelation. It remained to Calvin, the theologian of the Reformation, to endeavour to incorporate this new conception of the personal, all-sufficient nature of the Word into a theological system.

For Calvin, not only is the Word divine in its nature, but also the knowledge that it brings to man



is beyond the grasp of his natural capacities, and always, even when received, remains beyond his comprehension.

When we call it knowledge, we intend not such a comprehension as men commonly have of those things which fall under the notice of their senses. For it is so superior, that the human must exceed and rise above itself, in order to attain to it. Nor does the mind which attains it comprehend what it perceives, but being persuaded of that which it cannot comprehend, it understands more by the certainty of the persuasion, than it would comprehend of any human object by the exercise of its natural capacity. 6.

Yet it is possible for man to say something about the Word of God, although it is impossible for him to define it fully; for it is a revelation from God which has some form and content on the human level. The Word has a "two-fold relation"; on the one side to God, and on the other to man. The phrase itself is analogical, and it is an analogy which Calvin regards as "not inappropriate". As the word of man is the image of the mind, so the Word of God is the image of his mind.<sup>8</sup> God reveals himself by his Word just as man expresses the content of his mind by words. As the words of man are the outward manifestation of his personality, so the Word of God can be applied to every expression of the being of God which is shown to man.<sup>9</sup> Calvin, however, warns against pursuing the analogy too far, and adds, "I am unwilling to carry the abstruseness of philosophy beyond the measure of

<sup>10</sup>  
my faith".

Nevertheless he is willing to allow the analogical nature of the phrase to express that the Word of God is "the lively image of his purpose", and that it represents the "eternal Wisdom and Will of God".<sup>11</sup> The Word may actually be equated with that Wisdom. "But far otherwise must we think concerning the Word of God, namely, that he is the Wisdom dwelling in God, and without which God could never be".<sup>12</sup> Since it has this relationship with the Wisdom of God it is certain that the Word is unchangeable and that it shows the majesty of God.<sup>13</sup> Also it is a Word of authority and power. Everything that comes to pass does so from the Will of God, and the Word is the instrument of that Will.

For it ought always to be borne in mind that the world stands through no other cause than that of God's Word, and that, therefore, inferior or secondary causes derive from him their power and produce different effects as they are directed. 14.

The Word is invested with the authority and power of God himself, which is absolute. It is an authority to which even the greatest on earth must bow;<sup>15</sup> and it has this property because it is the expression of God's Will; for he alone can "accomplish by a word whatever he pleases".<sup>16</sup>

In Calvin's writings the phrase, the Word of God, is constantly recurring. It is the touchstone which he uses to establish the truth of his doctrine; it

is the means whereby he denounces his opponents, and the place to which he directs them for the rectification of their views; not only is it the means whereby man gains knowledge of his own perilous state, but also it is intimately related to the power which establishes the redemption that is offered; it is the great cosmic force which created the worlds, and it is the eternal wisdom residing with God; it embraces action in its most violent and creative form, and truth in its purest validity and eternal quality. The Word of God is a concept whose connotation appears to expand and contract with great rapidity. When we seek to define its meaning we are led from the words of a preacher as he stands before his congregation to Christ in his truth, in his power, or in his eternal and divine person; from a phrase of Scripture to the power which has brought into being and which is sustaining all things that exist; from the Gospel, or the Law, or Scripture as a whole, to the truth which rests with the Almighty throughout all generations.

Calvin has certainly given a wide extension to the meaning of the Word of God. It remains to be seen whether he has managed to dissociate himself sufficiently from mediaeval ideas to give full expression to Luther's conception. This chapter will be an investigation of the three main forms in which the Word is presented

to man,-as preaching,as Scripture,and as Christ-;and an endeavour will be made to see in what way Calvin regarded these as interconnected and on what basis he established their authority.

### The Word of God as Preaching.

Calvin regards the Word preached as a very necessary form of God's revelation. It is,he declares,<sup>17</sup> the "only means of preventing destruction"; for it brings to men,in a direct way,a knowledge of the divine will and purpose. It is by means of the Word preached that the elect are drawn to God; for although there is a universal call by which all are invited to receive his mercy,"there is also a special call, with which he for the most part favours only believers, when,by the inward illumination of his Spirit,he<sup>18</sup> causes the Word preached to sink into their hearts".

But in what way can preaching become the Word preached? There is an obvious tension involved. On the one side there is the Word of God,his eternal and divine Wisdom which reveals itself to man,and on the other there is a man speaking. The tension is very apparent in our day,as Barth declares that this problem was the basis of the development of his particular approach.

But it simply came about that the familiar situation of the minister on Saturday at his desk and on Sunday in his pulpit crystallized



in my case into a marginal note to all  
theology -----. 19.

That it was also apparent in Reformation times is seen from Melanchton's refusal to preach because he believed that he was not called to that office by God. Yet it is also clear that, although there is an obvious tension between the divine and human in this act of preaching in which God's Word comes to man through human lips, it is an event in which this "inconceivable" event does take place. Throughout the history of the Christian Church it has been recognized that preaching is a necessary part of the presentation of the Gospel. What does Calvin regard as the requirements which must be fulfilled before the amazing assertion can be made that, when a man speaks God speaks; before a human address can be called the Word preached?

First, the human address must be concerned with the revelation which God has given of himself in Scripture. The doctrine contained in Scripture is both necessary and sufficient for man's salvation, and it is also the necessary and sufficient content of preaching. Thus Calvin, in his sermons, is concerned with the exposition and interpretation of Scripture. This was not a new departure in the history of preaching. Something similar had been practised by the apostles themselves, and later by Origen and

Augustine; but it had suffered eclipse during the Scholastic period until it had been rediscovered by<sup>20</sup> Luther. The Reformers' method had definite affinities with the accepted Scholastic method of commentary; but in substituting the Scripture for the Neo-Platonic - Augustinian authority of the Franciscans and the Aristotelian-Augustinian authority of the Dominicans, they reorientated religious thought. The Scripture became the preacher's authority, the source of his material, and his standard of criticism. For Calvin the first essential of a preacher is that he be<sup>21</sup> "a disciple of the Scripture".

Yet, although the preacher is dependent upon Scripture, the Word preached is not a secondary or inferior form of the Word. It has a primary importance of its own because God has willed that this method be used for presenting his Word to men. Calvin indicates the indissoluble relation between preaching and Scripture, and the unique place of the former in the divine intention, in commenting on Paul's charge to Timothy.

It is proper to observe carefully the word therefore, by means of which he appropriately connects Scripture with preaching. This also refutes certain fanatics who haughtily boast that they no longer need the aid of teachers, because the reading of Scripture is abundantly sufficient. But Paul, after having spoken of the usefulness of Scripture, infers not only that all should read it, but that teachers should administer it, which is the duty enjoined on them. Accordingly, as

all our wisdom is contained in the Scriptures,  
 and neither ought we to learn,nor teachers  
 draw their instruction,from any other source;  
 so he,who neglecting the assistance of the  
 living voice,will find how greivous an evil  
 it is to disregard that way of learning  
 which has been enjoined by God and Christ. 22.

This leads to the second necessary requirement  
 which must be fulfilled before an address can be called  
 the Word preached. The preacher must have a commission  
 from God to be a minister of his Word. This is not  
 only the personal experience of a call from God but  
 also is ratified by the call of the Church.<sup>23</sup> This  
 means that the Word preached has its existence only  
 in the life of the Church;and Calvin emphasises the  
 importance of such preaching when he declares that it  
 is the principal means which God uses for maintaining  
 the unity of his Church and edifying its members.<sup>24</sup>  
 Calvin regards these two conditions as absolutely  
 necessary. A man of great piety may speak about the  
 things of God,but what he says does not come under the  
 category of preaching unless he has been legally  
 received by the Church. Similarly,although a man may  
 have received a recognized call,if he does not take  
 Scripture as his authority it will not come about  
 that the Word is preached.

Actually,however,these conditions are not  
 sufficient in themselves to guarantee that the content  
 of preaching is the Word of God;for the Word preached

is finally an act of revelation. It is God who, by the gift of his Spirit, accomplishes that miraculous transformation by which a human address becomes the Word preached. This fact is forcefully emphasised by Barth in his Dogmatic. He states that the Word of God itself, intangible and devoid of all human basis, is the commission which makes proclamation real proclamation; that the Word, although it is not an entity which may be objectified by man, must be the object of such proclamation, and that it is so from time to time when God wills to make himself the object of human language; that the Word of God is the criterion by which proclamation is judged to be real proclamation, although it is a criterion which men can never apply; and that, finally and decisively, proclamation becomes real proclamation only when<sup>25</sup> God himself speaks.

In this we see clearly a development of Luther's conception of the personal nature of the Word.

Calvin also emphasises this conception when he states:

The outward preaching, I acknowledge, can do nothing separately or by itself; but as it is an instrument of the divine power for our salvation, and through the grace of the Spirit an efficacious instrument, what God hath joined let no man put asunder. 26.

Or again, although he would rather express the phrase "to preach Christ" in Luke's form of "preaching concerning the kingdom of God and in the name of



Christ", yet he adds,

it is all one in effect. He joins the kingdom of God and the name of Christ together; but because we obtain this goodness through Christ, to have God reign in us and to lead a heavenly life, being renewed into spiritual righteousness and dead to the world, therefore the preaching of Christ contains this point under it also. 27.

In preaching, he declares, "Christ repairs with his grace the world, being destroyed; which comes to pass  
28  
when he reconciles us to the Father". This is a recognition that the Word preached is God's direct revelation. It means that the effective Word preached is actually a Word from beyond the preacher; it is a Word which comes from the eternal purpose of God and is addressed to each man at the very centre of his existence. Although the preacher draws the verbal content of his address from Scripture, the result is not the preaching of Scripture; but the spiritual content of his preaching is the very speech of God, Christ himself in all his power, to those who have ears to hear.

Nevertheless Calvin's emphasis here that the Word preached is itself revelation when God wills to make it so, which is a logical corollary of its personal nature, can certainly not be described as a strong emphasis. Indeed we gain the impression that he was not actually greatly concerned about it. In both of the above cases he acknowledges it and then turns

aside to emphasise the necessity of preaching and of preaching doctrine. As we read his works we find little to assure us that Calvin was really concerned with developing the concept of personalism with regard to the Word preached. In so far as he lived in post-Lutheran times and could not fail to be affected by by this concept which had played such a large part at the beginning of the Reformation he included it; but his main concern is with more practical issues. Thus, although Barth quotes Calvin in his support, his thesis is a development of but one side of Calvin's thought - one which actually receives but slight emphasis in his writings. We may add that Calvin should have been concerned with it if he wished to present Reformation theology in its fulness; but in practice he is much more concerned with the framework of the structure into which the Word of revelation could come than with the theological consequences of the fact that the Word preached was actually revelation. Since God had been pleased to reveal himself by this means, the most man could do was to ensure that the human instruments were worthy and perform their proper functions. He dwells at some length on the necessity of the Church commission and the form of ceremony which should be followed; but his main emphasis is on the need of preaching true scriptural doctrine. Indeed all his works may be seen

as variations upon this theme. In his Commentaries the phrase "preaching the Word" is almost<sup>29</sup> invariably interpreted as preaching doctrine. The Church is seen as a divine-human society whose affairs must be conducted "decently and in order", and whose ministers must draw all that they teach from the Scriptures. This is a practical concern; the establishment, in disordered times, of l'Eglise bien ordonnée.

Thus Calvin turned to those more concrete conditions which had to be fulfilled before an address could become the Word preached. In opposition to the spiritual emphasis of the Anabaptists, which he saw led to disorder, he claimed that there was a tangible commission given by the Church which was essential before preaching became real preaching; and against both Anabaptists and Roman Catholics he claimed that there was a definite and tangible object with which the preacher was concerned, an object by which also his address must be judged, the doctrine contained in Scripture. Calvin is much more concerned with the tangible commission, object, and judgement, than with their intangible counterparts described by Barth. The emphasis Calvin brought was necessary; but in failing to develop the personal nature of the Word as preached he neglected one of the essential elements of Reformation thought and

in this way prepared for the rigid orthodoxy which later developed.

Since Calvin was vitally concerned with the orderly establishment of the ministry so that it might be a fit instrument of the Word, it would not have been surprising to have found him equating the Word of God with the words of the preacher. This, of course, would have been in opposition to the concept of personalism, but it could quite easily have developed from his emphasis upon order. Such a statement as, "it is impossible for him to err who, according to his duty as a preacher, promulgates what he has been taught by the divine Word (in Scripture)", in which absolute authority is given to the minister who draws his address directly from Scripture, would be an understandable conclusion to Calvin's practical emphasis. Yet it is not his final position. Throughout his work he is careful to retain the paradoxical relationship of human and divine in preaching. The following statement, concerning the power of the keys with regard to the ministry, illustrates well his general position.

Now this testification has been given to all ages and remains unaltered to certify and assure us all that the Word of the Gospel, by whomsoever it may happen to be preached, is the very sentence of God himself, promulgated from his heavenly tribunal, recorded in the book of life, ratified, confirmed and fixed in heaven. Thus we see,



that the power of the keys, in these passages, is no other than the preaching of the Gospel, and that, with regard to men, it is not so much authoritative as ministerial; for strictly speaking (*proprie*), Christ has not given this power to men, but to his Word, of which he has appointed men to be the ministers. 31.

This "strictly speaking" saves Calvin from making the equation that the constitutionally received authority of ministers is equivalent to the authority of the Word; and it also shows how close he was, in questions related to the practical field, to making this equation.

Calvin had witnessed the "violent dispute respecting the efficacy of the ministry" which had taken place between Luther and the Zwinglians, and<sup>32</sup> he comments upon this in his Institutes. Luther had certainly exaggerated the dignity of the ministry "beyond measure" when he claimed: "I am certain that when I enter the pulpit to preach or stand at the lectern to read, it is not my word, but my tongue is<sup>33</sup> the pen of a ready writer"- a statement which indicates how confused was his thought concerning the implications of the personal nature of the Word-; and Zwingli and Bullinger had completely opposed this in declaring that the word that is preached is "not<sup>34</sup> the Word by which we believe". Calvin offers to reconcile these two conflicting points of view; but he does no more than state the two sides of the

paradox. He recognizes that Paul "not only represents himself as a 'labourer together with God', but even attributes to himself the office of communicating salvation"; and adds,

it is certainly necessary to bear in memory those passages in which God ascribes to himself the illumination of the mind and the renovation of the heart, and thereby declares it to be a sacrilege for man to arrogate to himself any share in either. 35.

In this paradox, supposedly solved, Calvin is willing to remain. He stressed the authority of the ministry so that it was raised to the highest degree; and, one would gather that he desired the congregation to listen to the preacher in the attitude of mind expressed by Luther's extreme statement; but, in the end, he could not allow the ultimate authority of God to be transferred to mortal man.

#### The Word of God as Scripture.

Calvin regards Scripture as having come into being because God willed that the gradual revelation which he had given by his Word should be committed to writing. To the Patriarchs God spoke by means of his Son.

The saints in former ages, therefore, had no other knowledge of God than what they obtained by beholding him in the Son, as in a mirror. By this observation I mean that God never manifested himself to man in any other way than by his Son, his only wisdom, light, and truth. 36.

Such revelations were in secret and accompanied by signs.

But when God determined to give a more illustrious form to the Church, he was pleased to commit and consign his Word to writing, that the priests might there seek what they were to teach the people, and every doctrine delivered brought to it as a test. 37

First it was the Law. Then the Prophecies and the Psalms were added to give a "more evident and 38 copious doctrine". As has been shown before, Calvin's emphasis with regard to Scripture is upon its doctrine, its wholeness, and its unity.

The whole body, therefore, composed of the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and Histories, was the Word of God to his ancient people, and by it as a standard priests and teachers, before the advent of Christ, were bound to test their doctrine. 39.

With the coming of Christ in the flesh all that the human mind could know of God was openly displayed. Man is commanded to seek from him "the whole doctrine of salvation, to depend on him alone, to cleave to him alone; in short, to listen only to his 40 voice". In Christ, the Word of God, is all that man needs to know, or can know, concerning God. "And, indeed, what ought now to be either expected or desired from man when the Word of Life himself has 41 familiarly presented himself before us?". Because this revelation was full and final, the Word of God in its written form was completed with the writings of the

apostles; for they wrote of this complete and clear revelation of God under the guidance of the Spirit  
42  
of Christ. Calvin concludes his statement on the formation of Scripture thus:

Let us lay this down, then, as an undoubted axiom, that nothing ought to be admitted in the Church as the Word of God, but what is contained first in the law and the prophets, and second in the writings of the apostles, and that there is no other method of teaching aright in the Church than according to the direction and standard of that Word. 43.

Thus Calvin makes the general equation that the Scripture is the Word of God. But such an equation requires amplification. There are two distinct emphases which could be made. The one regards the subject of the equation and leads to the investigation of the tangible form of Scripture in order to find what, in it, can be called the Word of God. This investigation seeks by means of reasonable exegesis to discover something which can be held aloft and declared to be the Word of God. This is the sense in which Warfield understands Calvin's general equation when he says:

Now these sixty six books of canonical Scriptures handed down to us, in the singular providence of God, in a sound text which meets the test of critical scrutiny, Calvin held to be the very Word of God. This assertion he intended in its simple and most literal sense. 44.

The other is concerned with the predicate of the general equation, and enquires how, and in what



circumstances, the Word of God, which is his revelation, can be equated with Scripture. This is the way followed by Barth. He points out that the identification of revelation and the Bible is not one which can be presupposed or anticipated by man. In revelation we are concerned with the singular Word of God spoken by God himself; but in the Bible we are concerned with human attempts to repeat and reproduce, in human thoughts and expressions, this Word of God in definite human situations. "Therefore we do the Bible a poor honour, and one unwelcome to itself, when we directly identify it with this something else, with revelation<sup>45</sup> itself". The equation is true in that from time to time the Bible does become revelation; but the fact that the Scripture does from time to time become the Word of God is wholly dependant upon God's grace.

Ubi et quando visum est Deo, not in themselves but in virtue of the divine decision as expressed from time to time in the Bible and proclamation, because God who is free avails himself of them, the Bible and proclamation are the Word of God. A statement in such a form cannot be made about revelation. When we speak of revelation we are faced with the divine act itself and as such, which, as we had to remember in the past, is the ground and the limit, the presupposition and the proviso of what may be said of the Bible and proclamation as the Word of God. -- Thus when it is revelation we are looking at or starting from, we must say of proclamation and the Bible that they are God's Word, by from time to time becoming God's Word. 46.

It is evident that these two developments of the general equation that Scripture is the Word of God reach contradictory conclusions. The one claims that there is a tangible entity which can be objectified by man and asserted to be the Word of God; the other denies this, declaring that, although the assertion is a possibility, it is one which is determined by the will of God alone. What attitude does Calvin take? Warfield claims him as a supporter of the former; but Barth also claims to represent the Reformers' point of view.

From the general equation that Scripture is the Word of God Calvin proceeded to find certain elements in Scripture, such as its doctrine and the commands and promises which it contains, which he regarded as the explicit Word of God. To despise the doctrine  
<sup>47</sup> contained in Scripture is to despise the Word of God;  
 to add to the doctrine given in Scripture is to  
<sup>48</sup> overleap the limits of the Word of God. When  
 Jeremiah speaks of the Word which had come in days  
 of old, he is speaking of the "doctrine by which God,  
 as far as is expedient, manifests to us what would  
<sup>49</sup> otherwise not only be hidden but also incomprehensible".  
 The Word of God in Scripture is also a Word of  
 command as contained in the Law. The failure of Adam,  
 Sarah, and Rebecca to act in accordance with the  
 divine commandment is described as discrediting the

Word and as transgressing the limits of the Word.

Especially are the promises contained in Scripture regarded as the Word of God. It is with this aspect that the Psalmist is concerned in many of the cases  
51  
where he praises the Word; and it is the Word of promise that is the particular object of faith.

Although faith regards every part of the divine Word, it is the promise of grace which brings the assurance that God is a merciful Father in which  
52  
it rests with confidence.

This process of sifting out from Scripture elements which are explicitly God's Word is, of course, secondary to the general statement that the whole of Scripture is the Word of God. Nevertheless Calvin was willing to carry it out consistently and hold that certain parts of Scripture are not explicitly the Word of God. This is the implication of the historical principle of exegesis which, we have seen, he was always ready to apply. It is also seen from his attitude to the miracles recorded in Scripture. They are signs whose purpose is to direct men to the Word.

For they serve to prepare the minds of men, that they may cherish greater reverence for the Word of God, and we know how cold and sluggish our attention is if we are not excited by something else. Besides, it adds no small authority to the doctrine already received when, for the purpose of supporting it, he stretches out his mighty hand from

heaven. ----. Although, therefore, strictly speaking, faith rests on the Word of God and looks to the Word as its only end, still the addition of miracles is not superfluous, provided they are always viewed as relating to the Word, and direct faith towards it. 53.

Such distinctions between various parts of the Scripture shed light upon Calvin's attitude to the general equation concerning Scripture and the Word. He seeks to interpret the equation in two ways. The first regards the Scripture as the Word of God because it is the record of God's past revelation to men. It is on this historic basis that he establishes that the Scripture in its entirety is the Word of God. The second regards Scripture as the Word because it is the means of God's revelation to men in the present. But Calvin realized that Scripture as a record of the activity in history of the Word of God is to be regarded in a different light from the Scripture which is and can be the means of God's revelation in the present and the future. In the former sense Calvin regarded the Scripture as the Word of God much in the way that Warfield lays down for him; but in the latter he introduced distinctions in Scripture to give meaning to the conception of the Word of God active in the present. But, although he realized that there was a difference between the record of the activities of the Word of God in the past and the actual activity of that Word in the



present, he was not aware of the radical nature of that difference. Occasionally we find him<sup>54</sup> endeavouring to express a deeper distinction, but, in general, he considered that it was sufficiently well expressed by eliminating the elements of the historical environment and establishing doctrine. This he regarded as the essential element in Scripture; the Word of God for the present and the future. In effect this meant that the system of biblical theology which Calvin formulated was to be regarded as the Word. The whole of biblical doctrine, interpreted from the standpoint of the new revelation given in Christ and the theological formulations of the apostles, was the Word of God.

In this conception there is an apparent regression from that of the personal nature of the Word, which had been emphasised by Luther. Calvin, as we shall see, sought to give expression to this concept in his theology; but his orthodoxy, which enabled him to classify Scripture as an objective authority, forced him at this point to impersonalize the Word. How uncertain he was in his own mind as to the full implications of the new attitude to the Word of God is shown by such a comment as the following in which he discusses the prophets' preface, "Hear the Word of God".

Jeremiah made this preface that he might more effectively rouse the Jews. If he had omitted this -- his doctrine would have been treated with contempt. But, now, alleging the name of God --- he makes known his power in order to strike them with fear. 55.

Such a misunderstanding of both the prophet's call and the Word of God is certainly unworthy of a Reformer, and yet it is one which he repeats.

Thus Calvin realized that the Word of God for the present was not to be equated literally with the historic Word given in the past; yet by regarding a concrete system of doctrine as that Word he identifies revelation with the humanly determined content of Scripture, and makes a synthesis which Barth condemns. In the case of Scripture Calvin is not content to remain in the paradox which he had held with regard to preaching and the Word of God. In destroying the tension which must exist between revelation and the written word he misrepresents both Scripture and the Word of God.

#### The Word of God as Christ.

Calvin regarded the equation, the Word of God is Christ, as a definitive one. Although there are other forms in which the Word may be seen these are all summed up in Christ, the "essential Word of God". 56.

In speaking of Christ as the Word Calvin uses verbum and sermo without any apparent difference in

meaning. But it is interesting to notice the distinction he draws in his commentary on John 1:1.

I wonder what induced the Latins to render ὁ λόγος by verbum; for that would rather have been the translation of τὸ ῥῆμα. But granting that they had some plausible reason, still it cannot be denied that sermo would have been far more appropriate.<sup>57</sup>

This is apparently written under the influence of Erasmus' translation of John; but, although Calvin stresses the distinction here, he does not explain clearly what he means, nor does he apply the distinction systematically. In general verbum and sermo are used interchangeably. Although, in the Institutes, he uses sermo almost exclusively in proving Christ's divinity, he quotes, in this passage, from John 1:1, 14, using verbum.<sup>58</sup> The following quotation, taken from the passage where he is discussing the absence of Christ's body and the presence of his majesty, shows how naturally he used verbum for Christ.

---- but with respect to the body which the verbum assumed, which was borne of the virgin, which was apprehended by the Jews, which was affixed to the tree, which was taken down from the cross, which was wrapped in linen clothes, which was laid in the sepulchre, which was manifested at the resurrection, this declaration is fulfilled - Me ye have not always with you. <sup>59</sup>

In Christ all verba Dei have their origin, meaning, and significance.

John speaks more clearly than all others when he represents the Word, who from the beginning was God with God, as in union with the Father, the original cause of all things. For to the Word he attributes a real and permanent essence, and assigns some peculiar property; and plainly shows how God, by speaking, created the world. Therefore as all divine revelations are justly entitled the Word of God, so we ought chiefly to esteem that substantial Word the source of all revelations, who is liable to no variation, who remains with God perpetually one and the same, and who is God himself. 60.

God reveals himself to men in the creation of all things, and this activity is rightly seen to come from the Word of God, the expression of his wisdom and his will. It was in the creation of the world that Christ first became known - a Word of authority and power.

--- no sooner was the world created than the Word of God came forth into external operation: for having formerly been incomprehensible in his essence, he then became publically known by the effect of his power. 61.

And commenting on Psalm 33:6, Calvin says,

We may certainly and truly infer from this passage that the worlds were framed by God's eternal Word, his only begotten Son. --- as if it had been said, "as soon as God uttered the breath of his mouth, or proclaimed in a word what he wished to be done, the heavens were instantly brought into existence. 62.

It is this powerful and instant Word which governs all things which have been created, controlling and sustaining them in their proper functions. All the natural phenomena depend upon the "secret influence" of the Word both for their occurrence and



for their continued existence.

Hence is the alacrity of the sun and moon,  
and of all the stars in their constant  
courses, hence is the sedulity of the  
earth's obedience in bringing forth fruits,  
hence is the unwearied motion of the air,  
hence is the prompt tendency to flow in  
water. 63.

This, of course, does not mean that Calvin dispenses  
64  
with any idea of order in nature; but it does mean  
that he rejects any idea of nature moving  
independently of God. He declares that a natural  
philosophy is "senseless" which is not based on the  
principle that "everything in nature depends upon  
the will of God, and the whole course of nature is  
65  
only the prompt carrying into effect of his orders".  
The absolute necessity of this dynamic, sustaining  
power of the Word is seen from Calvin's comment on  
John 1:4.

--- the Word of God was not only the  
source of life to all creatures, so that those  
which were not began to be, but that his  
life-giving power causes them to remain in this  
condition; for were it not that his  
continued inspiration gives vigour to the  
world, everything that is would immediately  
decay, or be reduced to nothing. 66.

Man also, as a creature, has been brought into being  
and endowed with his peculiar properties through the  
effect of the Word. Thus he has received the light of  
reason so that he might acknowledge his Creator; for  
by his reason, "of which the Word is the source", he  
should see, as in a mirror, the "divine power of the

Word". Although man fell, the light of his reason was not wholly extinguished; but his reason was so dulled that he is not able to understand whence the light originates. He is unable to interpret aright the revelation of God which is given in the creating and sustaining Word addressed to nature and , through it, to himself. Thus, for salvation, there is needed a special revelation; a Word addressed to man in his fallen state. Thus Calvin turns quickly from a consideration of the natural knowledge of God to that which comes through the particular act of revelation in which the possibility of salvation is realized. It is not a new Word; for the Word addressed to man is also Christ, the complete Word of God, who undertakes a new office. He is not only the Word which created and sustains; he is also the Word which brings to man that knowledge of God which leads to salvation.

For there are two distinct powers which belong to the Son of God: the first, which is manifested in the structure of the world and the order of nature; and the second, by which he restores and renews fallen nature. As he is the eternal Word of God, by him the world was made; by his power all things continue to possess the life which they once received; man especially was endowed with an extraordinary gift of understanding; and though by revolt he lost the light of understanding, yet he still sees and understands, so that what he naturally possesses from the grace of the Son of man is not entirely destroyed. But

since by his stupidity and perversness he darkens the light which still dwells in him, it remains that a new office be undertaken by the Son of God, the office of Mediator, to renew, by the Spirit of regeneration, man who has been ruined. 68.

The Word, therefore, has always been life-giving, and has been seen as such since the creation of the world. Then he infused life into all creatures; now he restores life to man. Calvin insists that he is  
69  
the same Word, Christ in his two-fold function; but no clear manifestation of the power to give life to man was given until Christ came in the flesh. In Christ God revealed himself in such a way that "those who possess Christ have God truly present  
70  
and enjoy him wholly"; for "God has manifested  
71  
himself to us fully and perfectly in Christ". The revelation that is given is full and complete, and is of such a nature that it can not be obtained from any other source.

For as he is the only true image of the invisible God, as he is the only interpreter of the Father, as he is the only guide of life, yea, as he is the life and light of the world and the truth, as soon as we depart from him we necessarily become vain in our own devices. 72.

Here we see the personal nature of the Word clearly expressed in a way which was not apparent in Calvin's conception of the Word as preached or as written. We shall now investigate his conception of the inter-relatedness of the three forms in order to

see to what extent he endeavours to transfer the personal nature of the definitive form of the Word as Christ to the other two forms.

The Word of God in its Three-fold Form.

It is natural that a concept such as this with different facets to its connotation will appear to have a different meaning in different contexts. The Word of God as Scripture, as preached, and as Christ, will appear at one time to be actually Scripture, or to be actually preaching, without reference to the person of Christ; or, at another, to be Christ alone without obvious connection with Scripture or with preaching. The emphasis varies, and a different facet stands out more clearly in different contexts. But the facet must never be taken for the whole structure, nor can it be separated from it. The front of a building may be beautiful; but it ceases to have its true meaning and function if the rest of the structure is removed. The Word as Scripture is not a separable fragment of God's wisdom; nor is preaching a detachable thing which can be discussed without reference to Scripture or to Christ. Always there is a necessity to look behind the fragment to the whole; to pass from the object in the foreground to the background into which it blends, and from which it gains its setting and its meaning. There is a



natural necessity now to be pointing to one side, now to another; but there is also a logical necessity ever to be pointing to the whole structure to which the particular object of thought is related.

It is clear that Calvin recognized the distinctions between the various forms of the Word. He is frequently to be found discussing what aspect of the Word is referred to in particular passages of Scripture. When the Psalmist says that "the Word of the Lord is tried", Calvin declares that this must be understood of the promises and not of the  
<sup>73</sup> commandments; and in commenting on Titus 1:3, he discusses whether the Word applies to Christ or to the preaching of the Gospel, rejecting the former  
<sup>74</sup> because it is a "little forced". But it is also clear that Calvin recognized the unity of the Word. Christ is the "essential Word", the "source of all  
<sup>75</sup> revelations". This is recognized by Scripture; for

when the Scripture speaks of the Word of God, it certainly were very absurd to imagine it to be only a transient and momentary sound, emitted into the air, and coming forth from God himself; of which nature were the oracles given to the Fathers, and all the prophecies. It is rather to be understood of the eternal wisdom residing with God, whence all the oracles and all the prophecies proceeded.  
<sup>76.</sup>

Also, although there is a need to see some distinction between preaching and Christ, it is a distinction in unity; for preaching, the Gospel proclaimed, has as its

essential content "that Christ is given to us, and in  
<sup>77</sup>him is life". Of natural necessity there is a difference  
 in form between the Word of God as written, as preached,  
 and as Christ; but there is no difference in content,  
 for it is God's truth, God's Son.

Thus we see that, For Calvin, there was a deep,  
 underlying unity in the various facets of the Word of  
 God. Both the Word which was written by human hands  
 and the Word which is spoken by human lips have an  
 essential connection with that Word which was with  
 God before all ages, which created and sustains, and  
 which was made man for our salvation. From letter and  
 from sound we are directed to a person; from  
 Scripture and from preaching we are directed to  
 Christ. There is a movement from form to content, a  
 content which is a simple message of salvation; and  
 then from content back again to form, the form of the  
 Son of God, crucified and risen, the eternal Redeemer.  
 This definitive equation, that God's Word is God's  
 Son, really precludes any final conclusion in the  
 statement that Scripture or preaching is the Word of  
 God. Calvin actually recognizes this when he  
 condemns those foolish people who endeavour to ~~prove~~  
 to unbelievers that the Scripture is the Word of God;  
 for this statement has no meaning without the  
<sup>78</sup>personal experience of faith.

Calvin's conception of the unity of the Word in its three forms, and the definitive nature of the Word as Christ, God's Son, determined that his discussion of the Word be kept on the plane of personalism. This is truly a Reformation concern; and Calvin, despite all that has been said, endeavoured to give practical expression to it. Although he frequently speaks of and uses the Word as Scripture as if it were nothing more than a system of biblical theology, he does, from time to time, ascribe to it certain aspects which imply personality. The Word is only seen in its true nature when it is regarded ~~as~~ directed to each man personally. It is possible to regard all that is written in Scripture as true; it is possible to regard it as a direct revelation from God; but unless it is seen as directed and living truth, and ~~m~~akes its home in a man's heart, it is not accepted as the Word of God. "There can be no faith", says Calvin, "except we know that the Word is destined for us". The doctrine which he calls the Word is not mere truth to which the mind gives assent; it is not an inert and dead thing which is presented to the intelligence of man; but it is "living and efficacious" doctrine. It is

a doctrine, not of the tongue but of the life, and is not apprehended merely with the understanding and the memory ---

but it is only received when it possesses  
the whole soul and finds a seat and  
residence in the inmost affection of the  
heart. 82.

It is particularly when he is speaking of the  
assent which is given to the Word that Calvin  
expresses its mysterious personal nature. We have  
already noted that the knowledge which is brought by  
the Word is an incomprehensible knowledge; for  
even when it is received it is not understood. 83  
The assent given by man "is from the heart rather  
than the head, from the affections rather than the  
understanding"; and this we may regard as Calvin's 84  
way of expressing the response of personality to  
personality. The Word "secretly" penetrates into the  
inmost being of a man, bringing an apprehension of his  
will and a constant embracing of his truth. 85

The Pauline conception of Union with Christ best  
expresses for Calvin the nature of that  
acknowledgement which is a true recognition of the  
Word. To acknowledge the Word is to become one 86  
with the Word.

For what slender hopes shall we form if we  
hear that the Word of Life contains in  
himself all the plenitude of life while we  
are at an infinite distance from him --.  
"I am the bread of life which came down  
from heaven" ---. In these words he shows,  
not only that he is life, as he is the  
eternal Word who descended from heaven to  
us, but that, in descending, he imparted power  
to the flesh which he assumed, in order that  
it might communicate life to us. 87



Thus the true acknowledgement of the Word of God is a mysterious and secret union of Christ with<sup>88</sup> believers which is by nature incomprehensible. And the Word truly acknowledged is a Word of power; for those who are united to the Son of God stand in the presence of God bearing "the name and character of Christ, and are viewed in him rather than in<sup>89</sup> themselves". This is precisely Luther's concern. The justification of the sinner through faith in the personally uttered Word of God was his own vital experience.

The Word which is addressed to the inmost being of a man is a spiritual Word, having an essential connection with the Holy Spirit. Calvin declares that, "till our minds are fixed on the Spirit Christ remains of no value to us; because we look upon him as an object of cold speculation without us,<sup>90</sup> and therefore at a great distance from us". This aspect of the Spirit acting with the Word will be examined in the following chapter; but let one point be noted here. The Word is not something distant, something that can be objectified. If there is such an entity which may appear to be the Word, it is not the Word in reality. Although Calvin speaks of the Word being rejected, those who reject do not recognize that it is the Word of God which

they reject. When the Word is recognized there is, at the same time, a personal relationship of unity established. "We embrace Christ by faith, not as appearing at a distance, but as uniting himself to us, to become our head and to make us his members"<sup>91</sup>.

The fact that Calvin recognizes that Christ is the definitive Word of God to man, and that he recognizes from time to time the implications of personalism associated with this, throws into clear relief the discontinuity in his thought caused by his equating that Word with biblical doctrine. If the Word of God is a person who presents himself to us, and by his power of grace makes us one with himself, it is obviously false to equate him with a system of biblical theology. As we have seen Calvin is not unaware of this and, particularly with reference to faith, stresses the personal nature of the living doctrine which must infuse itself into the whole personality of the man. But for all this he continues, in general, to regard the Word as Scripture as an impersonal, objective, theological system.

Calvin appears to use the phrase, the Word of God, in two main senses; the one applying to biblical doctrine, and the other to Christ. These two senses are occasionally related, as in his

conception of faith; but more frequently they are treated in isolation. Warfield and Davies assume this distinction, and obviously regard it as an absolute distinction, when they declare that Calvin regarded the Scripture as the Word of God literally and make no attempt to discuss any interrelation between this sense and the Word as Christ<sup>92</sup>. If a case could be made out for this absolute division from Calvin's use of the word sermo instead of verbum for Christ, it might be legitimate to discuss them separately. But Calvin is not consistent in this verbal distinction and, furthermore, as we have seen, he actually endeavours to harmonize his conception of the Word as Scripture and as Christ.

Calvin was dealing with a marvellous and gigantic concept which he was unable to bring under systematic control. He recognized that Christ was the essential Word; but for practical purposes he regarded a system of biblical theology as the Word of God. This was a type of orthodoxy which Calvin found very useful to apply. It gave an objective authority to Scripture and to his exegesis. But, although Luther himself had not been able to free himself from it, it contradicted one of the principal insights of the Reformation. Calvin emphasised a most important point when he brought biblical theology into such prominence

and related it closely to the Word of God; but he forced this relationship too far in making an equation between incommensurables, the scriptural doctrine and the Word of the eternal God.

#### The Power of the Word.

The inconsistency in Calvin's thought is brought out more clearly by his view of the power of the Word in the world and among men. Man, as a part of nature, is addressed by that all powerful Word which is addressed to nature; but in so far as he is human he is addressed by a Word which does not have the same absolute power. The difference is shown by Calvin's comment on Psalm 107:20, "He sent his Word and healed them". The act of healing is seen to refer to the healing of diseases which man cannot control. "God has but to will it, or to speak the Word, and instantly all diseases, even death itself,<sup>93.</sup> are dispelled". This is an activity of the Word which is extended to all men, believers and unbelievers alike. From this Calvin draws a "very appropriate analogy", declaring that, as "corporeal maladies are not removed except by the Word or command of God, much less are men's souls restored to the enjoyment of spiritual life except this Word is apprehended<sup>94</sup> by faith". It may be an appropriate analogy, but it is



not a complete one; and its incompleteness shows the difference between the two forms of the Word which Calvin regards as addressed to man. Man, as part of nature, is addressed by a Word of God which has power to fulfil its message, the command is also the deed; but man, as a spiritual being, is addressed by a Word which is really set in a conditional context.

The Word of God which abideth for ever is perfectly clear: 'If the wicked will turn from all his sins, all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him'. 95.

The Word directed to the sickness of man's soul is a Word which can be denied. Calvin claims that in its essence the Word is still the same; "for the wickedness and depravity of men do not make the Word  
96  
to lose its own nature". It has the absolute authority of divine truth, and it has the same divine power inscribed in it. "The Gospel", says Calvin, "is always a fruitful seed as to its power, but not as to what  
97.  
it accomplishes in men".

Yet there is a sense in which the Word addressed to man is a Word which has explicit power. Commenting on Hebrews 4:12, Calvin says, "Whenever the Lord addresses us by his Word he deals seriously with us, in order to touch all our inmost thoughts and  
98  
feelings". Calvin would like the power of the Word

expressed here to refer to the faithful alone; for it is evident that the Word is not equally efficacious to all, and that there are many in whom it is not so efficacious "as to penetrate, into them to the dividing of the soul and spirit". But he sees that the context is a general one and that this activity of the Word must also be applied even to those who do not receive it. They are automatically placed in the negative category of those who have not accepted the Word.

They indeed laugh, but it is a sardonic laugh; for they inwardly feel that they are, as it were, slain; they make evasions in many ways so as not to come before God's tribunal; but, though unwilling, they are yet dragged there by this very Word which they arrogantly deride; so that they may be fitly compared to furious dogs, which bite and claw at the chain by which they are bound, and yet can do nothing as they still remain fast bound. 99.

It can then be said about the Word addressed to man that in general it has only the power of judgement. Calvin still declares that it is a living Word which is presented to the whole personality of man; but the final result is merely a judgement. The Word is "a living thing and full of hidden power", in order

that it may scrutinize all parts of the soul, search the thoughts, discern the affections, and, in a word, show itself to be the judge. 100.

This is a strange limiting of the power of the Word of the eternal and almighty God.

Thus the Word which is addressed to fallen man is never a mere command. Such is its nature when it is addressed to natural phenomena; and as such it can never be rejected. But to man it comes in the form of an offer, even perhaps with a hidden and unexpressed condition contained in it. Even when the Word appears to come unconditionally, as a statement of a command, if there is any possibility of its being altered, there must have been an unexpressed or implied condition. Hezekiah received the Word of condemnation from the lips of Isaiah, "Thou shalt die"; but he turned to the Lord in repentance and prayer, and recovered from his illness. This situation presents Calvin with some difficulties. He tries to suggest that Hezekiah has "attached more meaning to the Prophet's words than they actually conveyed"; yet it is apparent that the words of Isaiah could scarcely carry any other meaning than that which Hezekiah understood. He goes on to claim that, although this was the Word of God, it was an incomplete Word, and that, in this apparently complete condemnation, there was some unuttered condition.

But it may be thought strange that God, having uttered a sentence, should soon afterwards be moved, as it were, by repentance to reverse it; for nothing is more at variance with his nature than a change of purpose. I reply, while death was threatened against Hezekiah, still God had not decreed it, but determined in

this manner to put to test the faith of Hezekiah. We must therefore suppose a condition to be implied in that threatening; for otherwise Hezekiah would not have altered, by repentance or prayer, the irreversible decree of God. 101

But why did God threaten what he did not intend to fulfil? Why did he speak but part of his Word? He did so because "he was unwilling that Hezekiah should die; and indeed it would have been unnecessary and even useless to predict it, if a remedy had not been provided". 102. God, declares Calvin, did not use "dissimulation"; but his will was that Hezekiah should live, and he desired to bring this about by humbling Hezekiah to a voluntary condemnation of himself.

Thus in discussing the power of the Word, Calvin is forced to make a distinction between that Word which he has equated with scriptural doctrine or the words of a prophet and the living, active, all-powerful Word of God, which is the complete expression of his will. In the case of Hezekiah, where the result has been seen, Calvin can declare that the true Word of God was that Hezekiah should not die; but in general he is unable to make a definite statement. When pressed he makes a distinction between the pronounced Word and the hidden Word. His comment on 2 Peter 3:9, - "The Lord is not willing that any should perish" - is interesting in this connection.



But it may be asked, If God wishes none to perish, why is it that so many do perish? To this my answer is, that no mention is made here of the hidden purpose of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but only of his will as made known to us in the Gospel.

Calvin is unable to give the word "willing" its full meaning; for, on his voluntaristic premisses, this would be equivalent to declaring that certainly none should perish, for all will come to repentance.

Therefore he declares that this is the will of God as revealed in the Gospel, and hints at a more important, fuller, hidden will which God has not revealed. This is a strange statement from one who extols the Gospel so highly; and yet he makes it without any apparent questioning.

Calvin's inconsistency is here fully revealed. Why is it that the Word addressed to the natural world carries absolute and immediate power, while when it is addressed to man it has, generally speaking, only the minor and rather negative power of judgement? Calvin is actually speaking of two different entities under the same title. Nature is addressed by Christ, the complete expression of the will of God; but man, in so far as he is confronted by Scripture, is not addressed by the complete Word of God for him in the present. In the Scripture he is confronted by a recollection of, and a witness to,

the activity of the Word of God in history; by a record of his will as it has been made known in past action. The actual Word of God for this or that man is not clearly revealed, but remains "hidden". Calvin could well have used and developed the Lutheran conception of the Deus revelatus who is at the same time the Deus absconditus; but it would have given a completely different emphasis to his dogmatics. If he had been willing to apply this conception of the "hidden" nature of the complete Word of God addressed to men, he would not have been tempted to equate scriptural doctrine with the complete Word of God. He would have saved himself from certain embarrassment; but he would also have forfeited some authority. There is no doubt that he took up a strategically strong position when he held that there was a tangible entity which could be equated with the complete Word of God. But strategic position is not always a criterion of truth, and we have seen how he was forced at times to abandon it. In general Calvin is not interested in discussing the relation between the recollection of past revelation and the possibility of the "hidden" purpose of God being revealed in the present; in fact, it is only occasionally that he draws a distinction. In general he is willing to equate the Word witnessed to in scriptural doctrine with the

complete Word of God. In doing so, however, he reduces Christ to a system of biblical doctrine and equates his office of Mediator with that of Judge.

The Confusion of Divine and Human.

The Word of God, to which Calvin points as his authority, is a complicated and difficult concept. The Word has form which can be objectified; but the content of the Word is of such an intimate nature that it is impossible to objectify it. The nature of the recognition which it commands is immediate, and the authority for its acceptance is contained in itself; "for the truth of God is sufficiently solid and certain in itself that it can receive no better confirmation from any other quarter than from  
104  
itself". To endeavour to objectify the content of that which is immediately received is merely to speak about the form; for there are no categories into which the immediately received essence may be placed.

In discussing the relation of Scripture and the Word of God, there are three obvious axes of reference. There is the form which is Scripture, human words which are related to one another according to the rules which are accepted for such a presentation; there is the content associated with these words,

their normal meaning, which we can describe as the human content, since it may be determined by applying the rules of human composition; and there is the divine content, also related in some way to the ~~human~~ form, and called the Word of God. It is clear that Calvin recognized these distinctions. It has been shown that he recognized the reality of the ~~human~~ form of the Scriptures, and that it must be treated in the same way as any other similar form would be treated; he recognized also that there was human content, the meaning that men acknowledged to be enclosed in this form; and he recognized the divine content, which was of such a nature that it presented itself not so much to the mind as to the whole personality. The ~~human~~ form is words; the human content is meaning; and the divine content is Christ. Calvin was insistent that these were to be distinguished. He condemned those who, while admitting that there was such a thing as the divine content, failed to acknowledge it in its spiritual reality. On the one side there were those who had a merely historical faith who, although admitting that the words of Scripture were true and from God, equated implicitly the divine content with the form and  
105  
human content; and, on the other, there were the  
106  
literalists who made this equation explicitly.



How did Calvin himself distinguish between the divine content and the human content and form? Although he does not answer this question explicitly with respect to Scripture and preaching, he makes a full investigation of the problem of the relation of human and divine in his discussion of the sacraments. Here he was on polemical ground and was forced to state his position clearly. This example is a very suitable parallel; for not only does the sacrament present a human-divine relation similar in nature to that which is given in the Scripture but it is also for the same purpose. After discussing the benefits which Christ brings, Calvin says:

It remains for all this to be applied to us: which is done in the first place by the Gospel, but in a more illustrious manner by the sacred supper, in which Christ offers himself to us with all his benefits, and we receive him by faith. 107

Calvin realizes that there is a distinction to be made between that which is spiritual and that which is corporeal in a sacrament.

In order to enjoy the thing signified together with the sign, and not a mere sign destitute of the truth it was intended to convey, it is necessary to apprehend by faith the Word contained in it. Thus, in proportion to the communion we have with Christ by means of the sacraments, will be the advantage we derive from them. 108.

In order to explain this distinction more fully

he adopts the Augustinian distinction between the sacrament and the matter of the sacrament, which he explains as follows:

For his meaning is, not only that a sacrament contains a figure and some truth signified by that figure, but that their connection is not such as to render them inseparable from each other; and even when they are united the thing signified ought always to be distinguished from the sign, that what belongs to the one may not be transferred to the other. 109.

In the sacrament there is form - the bread and the wine; and this is recognized to have content. But there is also a divine content which makes the sacrament a sacrament. This three-fold nature is always present in the sacrament, even when it is not recognized. "For what God has instituted ---  
110  
retains its nature, however men may vary". But he who does not recognize this three-fold nature of the sacrament, who merely eats "externally" and not "internally", pressing "with his teeth and not eating "in his heart", recognizing only the corporeal content and form, receives nothing but  
111  
"a vain and useless figure". He who, however, acknowledges the divine content with the spiritual acknowledgement of faith, receives Christ, the Word of God; for "Christ is the matter or substance of  
112  
all the sacraments".

But in what way is Christ the substance of the

sacrament? Calvin declares that, in the sacred supper, the body of Christ is not "exhibited, by a local presence, to be felt by the hand, bruised by the teeth, and swallowed by the throat"<sup>113</sup>. The bond of union between the body of Christ and the believers who partake of the sacrament is the Spirit of Christ, "who is, as it were, the channel by which all that Christ himself is and has is conveyed to us"<sup>114</sup>. There is no change in the natural content of the bread. It is certainly something which it was not before; but it is still real bread which represents<sup>115</sup> the true body of Christ. Nor is the bread his body because of his ubiquity, as Luther held. Christ's spiritual body is not of such a kind that it fills all things; but his body is in heaven.

But if we elevate our views and thoughts to heaven, to seek Christ there in the glory of his kingdom, as the symbols invite us to him entire, under the symbol of bread we shall eat his body, under the symbol of wine we shall distinctly drink his blood, so that we shall thus enjoy him entire.<sup>116</sup>

Christ is in heaven and reigns over an unlimited kingdom. He exerts his power wherever he pleases; inspiring, sustaining, strengthening, "just as if he were corporeally present"; he feeds his people "with his own body, of which he gives them<sup>117</sup> participation by the influence of his Spirit". But he is in no way bound to the symbols which he uses.

The relation of the human content and form to the divine content is analogical; for it is by contemplation of the analogy enshrined in the sacrament that men are carried from the human to the divine, from the corporeal to the spiritual.

So when the bread is given to us as a symbol of the body of Christ, we ought immediately to conceive of this comparison, that, as bread nourishes, sustains, and preserves the life of the body, so the body of Christ is the only food to animate and support the soul. When we see wine presented as a symbol of his blood, we ought to think of the uses of wine to the human body, that we may contemplate the same advantages conferred upon us in a spiritual manner by the blood of Christ; which are these - that it nourishes, refreshes, sustains, and exhilarates. 118.

The result is a "most intimate fellowship, by which  
119  
we are united with his flesh".

Yet, although Calvin states his attitude so clearly, he confesses that he is unable to understand the greatness of the mystery which is contained in this divine-human relation. Before he begins his discussion he urges his readers to endeavour to rise higher than he is able to conduct them.

Nothing remains for me, therefore, but to break forth in admiration of that mystery, which the mind is unable clearly to understand or the tongue to express. 120.

If any one inquire of me respecting the manner, I shall not be ashamed to acknowledge, that it is a mystery too sublime for me to be able to express, or even to comprehend; and, to be still more explicit, I rather experience it than understand it. 121.



It is apparent that this general analysis of the relation of human and divine in the sacrament is directly applicable to the concept of the Word of God in Scripture (and in preaching). There also we are considering something which has form and content on the human level, and which has a divine content. Calvin's statements regarding the sacraments can be paralleled almost exactly by his statements regarding Scripture. The purpose of the Scripture is to present Christ, the Word of God. This presentation may be disregarded and the Scripture regarded merely as a human document; but, if this is so, it is because the Spirit has not spoken to our hearts and made real the spiritual nature of the Word. When the true Word is acknowledged by the believer he becomes united with Christ and is renewed in his whole personality. And finally Calvin also confesses that the nature of this relation of human and divine as it occurs in the Scripture is mysterious and incomprehensible. But there is this great difference. In discussing the sacrament Calvin is deeply concerned to show that the actual divine body of Christ is not enclosed in the corporeal substance. It is truly conveyed to man through the corporeal substance of bread by the mysterious power of the Spirit. With regard to the Scripture, however, Calvin

is not concerned with emphasising a parallel distinction, and his thought at this point is quite confused. Occasionally he indicates that he will not allow the spiritual reality to be confused with the corporeal substance; but more frequently he makes this equation himself.

Although Calvin stressed the distinction between the human and the divine aspects of the sacrament, he was willing to allow the name given to the divine content to be applied to the human in a certain sense. The bread is the body and the wine is the blood, not literally, but figuratively and analogically.

It remains for us, therefore, to acknowledge that, on account of the affinity which the things signified have with their symbols, the name of the substance has been given to the sign, in a figurative sense indeed, but by a most apt analogy. 122.

Calvin also regards the phrase, Word of God, as analogical, although he will not permit himself to explore the analogy far. But it is "not inappropriate" to apply a human concept such as word to God, when it applies to the "lively image  
123.  
of his purpose"; Christ, the Word of God. So also the Scripture is the Word of God, because God reveals himself through it. Calvin does not work out the relation of human and divine with respect to the Scripture as finely as he does with respect to the sacrament; but he obviously regards it as legitimate

to adopt the same procedure and use the name of the spiritual reality, the Word of God, for the corporeal substance, the Scripture.

In discussing this aspect of sacramental phraseology further, according to the common use of Scripture, Calvin declares that "the name of something superior is transferred to something inferior"; the title of something "spiritual, celestial, and invisible", is transferred to something "corporeal, terrestrial, and <sup>124.</sup> visible". This is a "metonymical" form of expression which is in common use in Scripture when sacred <sup>125</sup> mysteries are discussed. If Calvin had been willing to apply such careful reasoning to the Scripture he would have declared that the use of the name, Word of God, for Scripture was also the transfer of something superior to something inferior. He obviously recognizes this when he makes the following statements about Scripture.

Now the sacraments bring us the clearest promises, and have this peculiarity beyond the Word, that they give us a lively representation of them as in a picture. 126.

Wherefore let us abide by this conclusion, that the office of the sacraments is precisely the same as the Word of God; which is to offer and present Christ to us, and in him the treasures of his heavenly grace. 127.

But as Christ is the complete Word of God it is obvious that Calvin is using the name Word for

Scripture in an inferior sense.

Again, in the sacrament, the bread is the body of Christ only by the mysterious influence of the Holy Spirit; and in such a way that "the body of Christ is not truly or really enclosed in the bread"<sup>128</sup>. So we can conclude that, if Calvin had applied this to the Scripture and its relation to the Word, he would have said that the Scriptures are the Word of God by the mysterious working of the same Spirit, in such a way that the Word is not truly or really enclosed in the Scripture. Then the Word of God which comes through the Scripture would be a mysterious, spiritual Word, carrying his own immediate authority, and speaking to men's hearts, where he is received by the completely personal response of<sup>129</sup> faith.

It has been stated that Calvin did not express explicitly the type of relation between the Word of God and the Scripture which has been drawn from his writings by this method of comparison. It is not on this account illegitimate to use such a method. Indeed such a method must be used if we are going to have any idea of what Calvin would have said if he had been forced to answer the question concerning the relation of human and divine in the Scripture. It will have been seen that there are occasions when Calvin



implies that the distinctions between, and the relation of, human and divine in the Scripture are of the same type as he develops more fully with regard to the sacrament. But it must be admitted that, more frequently, the distinctions are blurred and the divine and human confused.

Calvin is frequently to be found using the term, the Word of God, for the whole of Scripture; in which usage he equates the Word with its corporeal form in its entirety. He also uses the Word for that aspect of Scripture with which he was particularly concerned, the doctrine which could be obtained from Scripture; and in this usage he equates the Word of God with the human content, admittedly as seen by the man of faith, but, nevertheless, the human content obtained by applying human reason and human rules to the form through which the divine content is expressed. Now this is quite legitimate on the premisses which he adopts in discussing the relation of divine and human in the sacraments. But in the sacrament the bread may be called the body of Christ only in a certain sense. It does not contain that body. The body of Christ is spiritually communicated and, as such, cannot be objectified or handled. The bread can be called the body of Christ; but it is the transfer of the name

something superior to something inferior. So too with Scripture. It must always be remembered that the use of the term, Word of God, for Scripture, for any of its parts or derivations from it, is the transfer of the name of something superior, spiritual, celestial, and invisible, to something inferior, corporeal, terrestrial, and visible. But Calvin did not make this statement, and it was only occasionally that he was aware of its implications. With regard to Scripture and the Word Calvin overleaps the limits which he has set down for the relation of human and divine, corporeal and spiritual realities. Especially is this so in his conception of authority.

In supporting his doctrine Calvin claims that it is "drawn from the pure Word of God and rests  
130  
upon its authority". By the "pure Word of God" he obviously means the Scripture as interpreted by a man of faith who applies the exegetical principles which he himself uses. But what authority does this carry? Certainly not that direct immediate authority which is associated with the spiritually conveyed Word of God. For the authority to which Calvin appeals here is some objective entity associated with the Word, when that term is applied to the natural content of Scripture. When Calvin declares that Scripture is self-authenticating, that its truth and authority cannot be demonstrated

by reason but is received intuitively by the immediate influence of the Spirit, he appears to be making a statement with regard to Scripture and its divine nature which exactly parallels his statements concerning the sacrament; but it is not so in practice. Calvin obviously regarded the doctrine which he obtained from Scripture as carrying the absolutely authority of the complete Word of God. In doing so he was making that very equation of body and Spirit which he had condemned with regard to the sacrament.

That which man receives through the instrumentality of Scripture is Christ, the Word of God; a person who presents himself in an immediate way to human personality. But he is not in Scripture, nor can he be equated with the humanly derived content, although it is legitimate to call it by his name. Calvin recognized that Scripture could be called the Word of God only in the context of faith; and to have faith is to receive Christ, the Word of God, as a person, and to be united with him. But Calvin was so intent upon establishing the authority of Scripture and the doctrine which he drew from it that he failed to grasp the implications of this statement. To speak of faith, or to speak of the impression one has received of a person, is to use abstract terms

which describe this or that aspect. It is not to speak of faith in its full reality, nor to present a person in his full and complete, living personality. A mediated representation is actually a series of abstractions which may, or may not, give some true idea of the person; but they certainly do not present the person in his immediacy. He is, as it were, stripped of his personality. He is an object and no longer a person. The absolute authority which is associated with the Word of God is a spiritual authority which has reality only in the personal realm. When the Word of God which addresses the whole personality of man is objectified, he loses his personal aspect, his absolute authority, and becomes, in Buber's terminology, and It instead of Thou. His true personality and his absolute authority are present only in his immediacy.

This, as we have seen, Calvin does occasionally recognize, especially when he is speaking of personal faith; but in general his thought is confused. It is easy to see how the generations which followed him, impressed by his mighty, authoritative works, came to regard acceptance of doctrine as the fundamental element in religion, and replaced faith in a person with belief in a thing. This depersonalization of Thou to It was, of course, never completely



accomplished, even in later Calvinism, for Calvin's confusion of thought at this point was also bequeathed to his followers; but it was certainly furthered. In so far as later Calvinism revealed a sterility and decadence in religion, which was already inherent in Calvin's own formulations, we may apply an apt quotation from Buber which reveals the drastic dangers of this tendency.

The primary word I-It is not of evil - as matter is not of evil. It is of evil - as matter is, which presumes to have the quality of present being. If a man lets it have the mastery, the continually growing world of It overruns him and robs him of the reality of his own I, till the incubus over him and the ghost within him whisper to one another the confession of their non-salvation. 131.

CHAPTER V.The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit.

On a number of occasions throughout this thesis reference has been made to the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with authority. The doctrine of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit which Calvin developed is the basis upon which his assertion of the absolute authority of the Scripture rests; for the Scriptures are recognized as being directly from God himself, his own Word without any element of human frailty and therefore of absolute authority, by the witness of the Spirit in the heart of man. We have examined Calvin's attitude to Scripture and the Word of God. We shall now, in conclusion, examine this doctrine which is fundamental to his assertion of their authority.

It was natural that Calvin should have included in his doctrine this activity of the Spirit in the hearts of men. The whole theological atmosphere had changed since the time when Aquinas had been able to propound a doctrine of revelation which gave no place to the Spirit.<sup>1</sup> One of the characteristics of the breakdown of the mediaeval system was the development of individualism; and in the realm of religion this expressed itself in the form of an acknowledgement of the authority of the Spirit of God speaking to

the individual soul. While the Church remained strong this, as we have seen, was vigorously attacked. But the development continued. The Spirit played an all-important part at the beginning of the Reformation. The idea of personal revelation which produced a personal faith rested completely upon the conception of the Holy Spirit acting as a witness in men's hearts. The actual doctrine did not receive explicit formulation until Calvin published the second edition of the Institutes; but although unexpressed it was a fundamental presupposition of the whole Reformation. Luther's attitude has been expressed thus:

The 'rock' on which Luther's interpretation of the Bible rests is a certain feeling and perception by the individual of the Bible's teaching.

In the last resort it is on an inward experience of having been taught by the Spirit ~~the truth~~ and meaning of the Divine words that the Christian must firmly take his stand. Just as Luther believed himself to have passed through such an experience, so, according to him, all others must first reach it and ~~then~~ make it their starting point.

This is the Spirit from on High that cooperates with the Word of Scripture.

"Each man must believe solely because it is the Word of God and because he feels within that it is true, even though an angel from heaven and all the world should preach against it." 2.

And Jackson writes thus of Zwingli's conception of the way man comes to a knowledge of God:

The Scriptures testify that God is a hidden God, and that only the Spirit of God possesses knowledge of Him so as to become the source

of knowledge to human hearts. ----

The only source of the knowledge of God, in the full Christian sense of such a word, is, therefore, the "mouth of God", by which term Zwingli designates the Bible, illuminated to the reader by the Spirit in his heart. 3.

Thus it was natural that Calvin should have included a recognition of the activity of the Spirit as a personal witness in his Dogmatics. Nevertheless it is to his great honour that he formulated a clear and concise doctrine of the Spirit's testimony which, as Dakin declares, "was immediately accepted throughout  
4  
the whole Protestant world".

Calvin's doctrine, however, was not merely the explicit formulation of a doctrine which had received implicit acknowledgement since the beginning of the Reformation. It was a doctrine formulated in the second generation of Reformers, and its formulation was influenced by certain historical factors. It is interesting to notice that this doctrine does not appear in the 1536 edition of the Institutes. In that first edition the general Reformation doctrine, that grace is due to the influence of the Spirit working  
5  
in the sinful soul of man, is included; but the idea of the Spirit's testimony is not developed explicitly. In the 1539 edition the doctrine appears in its completeness. The three intervening years were, as Doumergue describes them, "years of struggle" in which Calvin sought to establish the true faith in face of



opposition from the Romanists on the one side and the  
 Anabaptists and Spirituals on the other.<sup>6</sup>

The Romanists had brought forward a strong criticism of the Reformers' rejection of ecclesiastical authority and their acceptance of the Scripture as the Word of God. These two, they claimed, could not be separated. It was only the Church which could assure men that the Scriptures were from God; and since the Reformers had rejected the authority of the Church their whole position, which was based on an appeal to Scripture as divine, was untenable. Calvin's enunciation of the doctrine of the Spirit's testimony occurs as a direct refutation of this argument. If, as was generally agreed, the authority of the Spirit was that of God himself, this doctrine was an extremely strong counter to the Romanist claim.

Calvin realized, however, that before this doctrine would be accepted by men in general he had to dissociate himself from the extremists of the Reformation who had carried the appeal to the Spirit to inordinate extremes. The change of attitude towards the appeal to the Spirit among men of high intellectual standing is exemplified in the life of Erasmus. Nuttall writes:

The freedom of the Spirit, he says, had been the burden of his message; but by 1527 he had come to regret it. Rarum est donum discretio spirituum, he had remarked earlier.

Was not the spirit which inspired the Reformers the spirit of folly, even the spirit of Satan? There were, he thought, both moral and intellectual grounds for fearing so. 7.

Calvin was well aware of this type of criticism, and he attacked the spiritualistic sects whenever he had the opportunity.

That Spirit is not the patron of murder, fornication, drunkenness, pride, contention, avarice, or fraud; but the author of love, chastity, sobriety, modesty, peace, moderation, and truth. He is not a Spirit of fanaticism, rushing precipitously, without any consideration, through right and wrong; but is full of wisdom and understanding, rightly to discern between justice and injustice. He never instigates to dissolute and unrestrained licentiousness; but, discriminating between what is lawful and what is unlawful, inculcates temperance and moderation. But why should we spend any more labour in refuting this monstrous frenzy? 8.

Despite such repeated condemnations of the spiritualistic sects, Calvin never questioned the authority of the Spirit. His authority was absolute. In his discussion concerning the Trinity he declares of the Spirit that "we shall soon prove him also to be God";<sup>9</sup> and he proceeds to show that every relation between God and man is made actual by the activity of<sup>10</sup> the Spirit. It is to the authority of the Holy Spirit that men must submit their minds and wills if they wish to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God". Reason, whom the philosophers set up as the sole guide for life, is

commanded by "Christian philosophy" to give place and submit to the Holy Spirit. Indeed, if the true Christian life is to be realized, the human mind must divest itself of all its natural carnality and resign itself "wholly to the direction of the Spirit of God".<sup>11.</sup>

Thus Calvin never questioned the absolute authority of the Spirit of God. Nevertheless in his refutation of the Romanist, and in his rejection of the Anabaptist, position he formulated a doctrine which limited the scope of that authority and gave rules for its recognition and application. Such statements as the above, extolling the Spirit's authority, if set in the general context in which Luther, Zwingli, and the 1536 edition of the Institutes had considered the activity of the Spirit, would have been quite acceptable to the Anabaptists. But Calvin's development of the doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit does not allow them to be set in a general context. The formulation of this doctrine in the 1539 edition of the Institutes reorientated the whole conception of the activity of the Spirit. The principal activity of the Spirit in the hearts of men was now regarded as merely that of proving that the Scriptures are from God. Everything else must be related to this. Even the statement that, for a true

Christian life, the human mind must resign itself "wholly to the direction of the Spirit of God" was then interpreted as obedience to the rule of Scripture. This was a remarkable limitation of the function of the Spirit compared with the conception of his activity held by the first Reformers and by the Spirituals.

By this limitation Calvin may appear to have established an authority in the religious realm which could not only replace the objective authority of the Roman Church but also free the Reformation from the subjective tendencies of the Spirituals. The Spirit of God informed men that the Scriptures were divine, and therefore men must accept them as absolutely authoritative. Yet we must enquire whether, by his limitation of the activity of the Spirit to this particular function, Calvin has not merely restricted the Spirit's sphere of action without actually escaping from subjectivist tendencies.

Calvin, in trying to bring order into the appeal to the Spirit asserted that there was a "most certain criterion" by which the Spirit could be judged.

To Christians the Spirit of the Lord is not a turbulent phantom, which they have either spawned themselves in a dream, or received from the invention of others; but they religiously seek the knowledge of him in the Scriptures.



The Spirit is only recognized as the Spirit of God when he testifies to truths which are already in the Scriptures. Is he not then bound to the book? Calvin declares that he is not. He is the author of that book and, as he is not an inconsistent Spirit, what he reveals now will be in accordance with the former revelation. He is merely being "compared with himself, and considered in himself". Indeed this is the "way which he has chosen for the confirmation of his majesty among us", lest "Satan should insinuate  
13  
himself under his name". It must be recognized that there is something of value in this emphasis. The record of past revelation which can also become the means of present revelation has a definite normative value for the Christian. But Calvin, by placing his emphasis upon the objective authority and limiting the activity of the Spirit, fostered the easily made, but tragic, change of emphasis which substituted a rigid reliance upon the doctrine which it was the Spirit's only duty to authenticate for the vital personal relationship with the Spirit which alone could bring that doctrine to life.

If we proceed to examine Calvin's claim to have a "certain criterion" by which the Spirit may be examined, we must now ask how he uses Scripture that it may fulfil its function as examiner and also on

what grounds is he convinced that his interpretation is the true one. The first question has been answered in a previous chapter; and to the second Calvin gives this answer. The Christian has a certain discernment.

But it may be asked, whence have we this discernment? They who answer that the Word of God is the rule by which everything that men bring forward ought to be tried, say something, but not the whole. I grant that doctrines ought to be tested by God's Word; but except the Spirit of wisdom be present, to have God's Word in our hands will avail us little or nothing, for its meaning will not appear to us; ---. That we may then be fit judges, we must necessarily be endowed with and directed by the Spirit of discernment.

Calvin's reasoning has now come full circle. He began by granting the Spirit complete authority, if he was recognized to be the Spirit of God. But how is the Spirit to be distinguished from other spirits? By comparing him with the image of himself which he has impressed on the Scriptures. But how can we see this image correctly and clearly? By the power of true discernment which the Spirit gives. In this case the "most certain criterion" actually depends upon the authority of the Spirit for its certainty.

It is apparent that Calvin is not happy with this conclusion. He now admits that the solution which he declared was not a full solution to the problem is, in effect, the only practical one. Since John has commanded us to test the spirits there must be some

means of fulfilling this command. Calvin is forced to postulate that in the Scriptures have we certainty.

But the Spirit will only thus guide us into a right discrimination, when we render all our thoughts subject to God's Word; for it is, as has been said, like a touchstone, yea, it ought to be deemed most necessary for us; for that alone is true doctrine which is drawn from it. 15.

This apparently objective standard is not one in reality. Calvin admits that it is only the "godly" who are able to apply it; and they are the people to whom the Spirit has already spoken. Only those who have been instructed in the true doctrine of piety, and who submit to the Scriptures in docility and patience, have the power of testing the spirits. But those who know the true doctrine and who receive Scripture according to the rule of piety have already been instructed and led by the Spirit. The only conclusion which can be formed from this chain of reasoning is that the Spirit cannot really be tested.

Calvin recognizes that this reasoning has left him in a difficult position. He has been unable to define a truly objective criterion for testing the Spirit, and the final decision still remains with each man's own judgement. Therefore he proceeds to approach the question in another way. The first approach resulted in the establishment of a "private trial", which is really not a final trial for it leaves the whole of religion uncertain. Therefore there must also be a

"public trial" which refers to the "common consent and polity of the Church":

as there is a danger lest fanatics should rise up, who may presumptuously boast that they are endued with the Spirit of God, it is a necessary remedy that the faithful meet together and seek a way by which they may agree in a holy and godly manner. 16.

However, having established this second objective method of reaching a decision as to the nature of a spirit, Calvin proceeds to undermine his position by showing that it is not a conclusive test. There have been many such councils summoned by the Church of Rome which have "departed from the pure Word of God".

For though it be the ordinary way of seeking consent, to gather a godly and holy council, when controversies may be determined according to God's Word; yet God has never bound himself to the decrees of any council. 17.

Thus, instead of giving a certain principle by which the Spirit of God may be recognized, Calvin actually formulates two indefinite rules which give no finality.

Calvin was unable to eradicate the subjective element from his proof of the authority of Scripture by appeal to the testimony of the Spirit. This must not be regarded as a failure; for it must not be thought that an authority in religion which is in some way subjective is undesirable. Camfield writes,

Revelation, in order to be revelation, cannot be objective merely, it must be subjective as well. Only in being subjective can it be seen as objective. 18.



And Wheeler Robinson stresses the value of this aspect of religious authority well when he declares,

The fact is that an authority in religion wholly external to us ceases to be a moral and spiritual authority at all. -- The very essence of both morality and religion is that there be in them the relation of a person to other persons. 19.

When Calvin recognized that neither of the two trials gave finality he acknowledged that the Spirit could not really be tested. It appears, however, that this acknowledgement is given rather grudgingly because of polemical pressure rather than from a conviction of the nature of the Spirit's testimony as a personal relationship. In this case Calvin could allow neither that the private trial, which was very similar to the Anabaptist emphasis upon individual decision, nor that the public trial, which appeared similar to the Roman claim for the authority of councils, was of absolute authority. Yet in practice Calvin held that there was a "most certain criterion", the Scripture, by which the Spirit could be tested. If he were challenged he immediately appealed to Scripture as a certain authority; and, if his interpretation of Scripture were challenged, he turned to the witness of religious men who supported his interpretation. This he regarded as final. He did not appeal to the Spirit except in so far as he equated him with Scripture.

The basic mistake in Calvin's formulation of the

doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit is that he confuses faith in a personal God with belief in the written word of Scripture, or in an impersonal system of doctrine. If we recall those who may be regarded as the classical examples of men who have experienced the testifying power of the Spirit we find that this confusion of thought is not present. The testimony did not produce a belief that the Scriptures, in their entirety, were divine; but rather we see that one phrase, one sentence, or one doctrine, suddenly began to live in a way which brought its own conviction of truth. It produced, not a belief in the dead letter or the impersonal doctrine, but a living personal faith and communion with Christ. The word of Scripture became, for them, revelation - the Word of God. For Augustine in the Milan garden it was "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh"; for Francis walking in the Portiuncula chapel it was, "Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff"; for Suso, sitting at table, it was, "My son, if thou wilt hear my words"; for Luther in his cell, it was "The just shall live by faith". The testimony of the Spirit brought a revelation, a certain faith in God, an absolute assurance of salvation, a knowledge that these particular words had become God's Word.

It is clearly this type of experience that Calvin has in mind when he writes, concerning the testimony of the Spirit, that "we feel the firmest conviction that we hold an invincible truth", that we perceive "the undoubted energies of the Divine power, by which we are attracted and inflamed to an understanding and voluntary obedience, but with a vigour and efficacy superior to the power of any human will or knowledge", and that "it is, finally, such a sentiment as cannot be produced but by a revelation from heaven"<sup>20</sup>. But to apply this to the whole of Scripture is to make a generalization which is not experientially true. It may be possible to plead for Calvin that, if the Scriptures are a unity, it is permissible<sup>to</sup> claim that if one part is shown to be divine then the whole must be of the same nature. But, for Calvin, the Scriptures are a unity because the Spirit is their author, and this is proved in the very act of testifying which we are discussing. We recognize then that Calvin applied his doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit to prove that the whole of the Scriptures were from God. We have also seen that although he appealed to the doctrine of the Spirit's authorship to establish the authority of Scripture he did not, in practice, find it possible to give full meaning to this assertion. Thus we conclude that the claim that

the Spirit testifies to the divine nature of the whole of Scripture is an unwarranted extension of the true experiential basis of the doctrine of his testimony.

If Calvin's presentation of the doctrine of the Spirit's testimony is accepted in its entirety it certainly establishes the absolute authority of Scripture. But the alterations which Calvin has made to the idea of the Spirit's activity and the extent of his witness lead us to feel that he has dealt with this subject, which has reality only in personal experience, in a detached and arbitrary manner. As previously we noted a distinct tendency to depersonalize the Word of God to gain objectivity and authority, so here also we see a tendency to depersonalize the Spirit in order to gain the same ends. Wernle has claimed that this doctrine is, for Calvin, merely a "necessity of thought"<sup>21</sup>. Calvin was most reticent about his own experience of conversion, and it is difficult to decide how much he was influenced by the testimony of the Spirit. From his writings we must acknowledge either that he had some definite spiritual experience or that he stood near enough to the first Reformers to be able to appreciate to some extent the depth of their experience. But from an investigation of his



actual formulation and use of the doctrine of the Spirit's testimony we must say that he appears to regard it more in the nature of a logical necessity which established the authority of Scripture as the objective Word of God rather than as the expression of the fundamental, living, spiritual experience of the Reformation. It is not difficult to see why, as a direct result of Calvin's formulation, the testimony of the Spirit came to be regarded as merely establishing the "formal principle"<sup>22</sup> in Protestantism, and the authoritative Scriptures came to be regarded as the complete source of knowledge. After Calvin, says Dakin, the emphasis on the Spirit "tended to recede into the background"<sup>23</sup>.

Here again we see the conflict in Calvin's thought between the principles of orthodoxy and those of the Reformation. Previously we saw that Calvin's dogmatic statements regarding Scripture conflicted with his practical exegesis, and, although he endeavoured to bring them into union, he was unsuccessful; we saw that the Word of God, although at times accorded the personal nature which the Reformation experience of the revealing nature of the union of Spirit and written word had ascribed to him, was more frequently divested of his personality and regarded as a system of divine truth; and now we have

seen that the Spirit, whose newly recognized authority was given an important place in Calvin's dogmatics, actually lost his freedom and became bound to Scripture.

Calvin stands in history as a leader of the Reformation; but he also held an orthodox position with regard to Scripture. Pressed hard by opponents on two sides, he sought to establish an absolute objective authority. He looked for and found, as the Church had done in the second century of her life, a sure and manageable instrument which could be used in a legalistic way. Calvin undoubtedly sought to produce a dogmatic system which was in keeping with the new religious insights of the Reformation, and to a large degree he was successful. But it was precisely at this vital point, in his conception of the seat of authority, that he failed to incorporate these insights. His whole doctrine of revelation, therefore, is permeated not by Reformation ideas, but by orthodox conceptions. Because these ideas were established at such a dominant position in his dogmatics, inevitably they began to predominate over the true Reformation thought which was contained in other doctrines. Calvin failed to grasp with sufficient certainty that revelation in Reformation dogmatics could be nothing else than

the living Word of God; but taking his stand in the strategically strong, orthodox position he regarded it rather as a system of doctrinal truth. Once a position such as this was firmly established it was inevitable that faith would be regarded, not as living union with a person, but as acceptance of the doctrine of Scripture. In Calvin orthodox and Reformation thought lie uneasily side by side. Unfortunately it was the orthodox authoritarian view of Scripture which was eagerly adopted in the years which followed. Calvin, in seeking to establish the Reformation Church, had actually paved the way for the falsification of those new insights concerning the nature of the relation between God and man which should have been her greatest claim to reformation.

N O T E S.



Chapter I.

1. Mackinnon, The Origins of the Reformation, p.328.
2. Ibid. p.325.
3. Hulme, Renaissance, Protestant Revolution, and Catholic Reformation, pp.346-7.
4. Ibid, pp.348-9.
5. Mackinnon, A History of Modern Liberty, Vol.II, p.79.
6. cf. Grisar, Luther, Eng.Trans., Vol.II, pp.189-223.
7. Farrar, History of Interpretation, p.385.

Chapter II.

1. Inst. I,iii,1,2, and 3.  
Inst. I,iii,1. Et qui in aliis vitae partibus  
minimum videntur a belluis differre, quoddam  
tamen perpetuo religionis semen retinent:
2. Inst. I,v,1.
3. Opera XXIII, p.6.
4. Opera XXXI, p.194.
5. Inst. I,v,7.
6. Ibid.
7. Inst. II,xvi,8.
8. Inst. I,v,8,
9. The edition published in Geneva in 1550 is similar.  
M. Quorsum addis Creatorem caeli et terrae?  
P. Quoniam per opera se patefecit, in illis quoque  
nobis quaerendus est. Neque enim essentiae  
eius capax est mens nostra. Est igitur mundus  
ipse, veluti speculum quoddam, in quo eum possimus  
inssicere, quatenus eum cognoscere nostra  
refert. - Catechismus Ecclesiae Genevensis,  
1550, p.15.
10. Inst. I,v,11.

11. Inst. I,ii,1.
12. Cf.K.Barth,Nein,p.45. Eng.Trans.Natural Theology, 1936,p.109.
13. Inst. I,x,2.
14. K.Barth,Dogmatik I,i. Eng.Trans. The Doctrine of the Word of God,p.279.
15. Inst. IV,xvii,32.
16. K.Barth,Nein,p.37. Eng.Trans. Natural Theology, p.101.
17. Opera XLIX,p.23-24.
18. Ibid. p.37-38.
19. Ibid.
20. Opera XLVII,p.4. Quidam etiam ex philosophis Deum ita constituunt mundi architectum ut mentem illi in condendo hoc opificio adiungant.
21. Opera XLVIII,p.417.
22. Opera XLVII,p.5. Unde enim tot errorum labyrinthi in mundo,nisi quod homines proprio sensu non nisi ad vanitatem et mendacium feruntur?
23. Inst. I,x,3.
24. Inst. II,ii,15.
25. Cf. E.Brunner,Revelation and Reason,Eng.Trans. p.67-68,80.
26. Inst. IV,xvii,3.
27. J.Baillie,Our Knowledge of God,p.254.
28. Inst. I,vi,1. -- aliud tamen et melius adminiculum accedere necesse est,---.
29. Inst. I,vi,2. Semper enim Deus indubiam fecit verbo sui fidem,quae omni opinione superior esset.
30. Inst. I,vi,1.
31. Article on Calvin's Concept of Revelation in the Scottish Journal of Theology,March 1949,p.41.

- 32. Inst. I,ii,2.
- 33. Inst. III,ii,1.
- 34. Inst. I,vi,2.
- 35. Inst. III,ii,6.

### Chapter III.

- 1. Opera V.p.205. Introducing a quotation from Baruch Calvin writes,"sic enim loquitur propheta ... Also,before 1542,on p.229 he cited Baruch with the words "in prophetia Baruch .." On pp.181-2 he introduced the writers of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom as "duo sacri scriptores",and concluded by remarking, "Quorum scriptorum auctoritate adversarios nostros non valde premerem,nisi eos ipsos nobis opponerent. Qui tamen utcunque aliquo loco nobis esse debent: si non ut canonici,certe ut veteres,ut pii,ut multorum suffragiis recepti."
- 2. Calvin issued a preface to the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament which is usually found in an abridged form.( See an editor's note,Opera IX,p.828). In this he describes how the Canon came to be formed,and describes the difference between the two types of books thus: "Pourquoy il y a telle difference entre les premiers et les secondz,comme entre un instrument passé devant un notaire,et scellé pour estre receu de tous,et une credule d'un homme particulier. Il est vray qu'ilz ne sont pas à mespriser d'autant qu'ilz contiennent bonne doctrine et utile. Toutesfois c'est bien raison que ce qui nous a esté donné par le saint Esprit ait préeminence par dessus tout ce qui est venu des hommes".
- 3. Opera IX,p.411.
- 4. Ibid. In condemning the Papists' use of the Apocryphal books he says: "I am not one of those who would entirely disapprove of the reading of those books; but in giving them an authority which they never before possessed,what end was sought but just to have the use of spurious paint in colouring their errors".
- 5. Ibid.
- 6. Opera IX,p.413. They are "ecclesiastical books

which might indeed be read by the people, but are not entitled to establish doctrine".

7. Pannier, Le Temoignane du Saint-Esprit, p.112.  
 "Un fait nous frappe à première vue: non seulement Calvin n'a pas commenté les livres apocryphes---, mais il n'a pas commenté tous les livres canoniques."  
 Calvin failed to comment on Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, 2 and 3 John, and Revelation.
8. Pannier, ibid, p.113. "---c'est sans doute pour une raison plus grave qu'il a laissé de côté les trois livres attribués à Salomon, notamment le Cantique des Cantiques." He also quotes Reuss in support of the view that Calvin questioned the canonicity of Revelation and 2 and 3 John. But Reuss revises this in his History of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Church (Eng. Trans. 1884), and declares that his decision was too hasty.
9. Opera X, p.403. --- quando, si quis eam intelligat, aditum sibi quendam patefactum habet ad totius scripturae intelligentiam.
10. The order of publication of the Commentaries was: N.T. - Romans 1539, Corinthians 1547, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Pastoral Epistles, 1548-9; Hebrews, Thessalonians, James, 1549-50; Catholic Epistles 1551, Acts 1552, The Synoptic Gospels and John 1553. O.T. - Isaiah 1551, Genesis 1554, Psalms and Hosea 1557, the remaining Minor Prophets 1559, Daniel 1561, Job and Jeremiah 1563. He also expounded Deuteronomy and I Samuel in Bible studies. Joshua and the lectures on Ezekiel were published after his death.  
 The doctrinal importance of Romans has already been stressed. Of the situation to which the Epistles to the Corinthians were addressed Calvin says, "purity of doctrine had already begun to decline so that the main article of religion - the resurrection of the dead - was called into question". (Opera XLIX p.297). He points out that Paul's desire was to establish true doctrine. In his first commentaries Calvin was concerned with establishing doctrine and showing its meaning for the Church, and to this end he chose those epistles which had this as their theme.



"We see that Paul nowhere spares false doctrine. The Epistles to the Galatians, to the Colossians, to the Philippians, and to Timothy, are short; yet in all he does not merely censure the false apostles, but also points out at the same time in what respects they injure the Church." (Ibid p.298).

11. Hunter, The Teaching of Calvin, p.17.
12. Opera XI, pp.674-676. "When we asked him, according to custom, whether he was in accord with us on all points of doctrine, he replied that there were two on which he could not share our views: that we inscribe the Song of Solomon in the sacred books,-----.  
We adjured him not to treat rashly, as of no account, the constant witness of the universal Church; we pointed out that there is no book whose authenticity is doubtful about which some discussion has not been raised; that even some of those to which we now attach certain authority were not admitted from the beginning without controversy; that precisely this one is one which has never been openly repudiated. We also exhorted him against trusting unreasonably in his own judgement: ---.  
When these arguments had no effect on him, we considered amongst ourselves what ought to be done. The unanimous opinion was that it would be dangerous and a bad precedent if we admitted him to the ministry in these circumstances.----.  
We should thus condemn ourselves for the future to raise no objection to another, should one present himself and wish similarly to repudiate Ecclesiastes, or Proverbs, or any other book of the Scriptures, without having to enter a debate as to what is worthy and what is not worthy of the Holy Spirit".
13. Warfield, Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, in Calvin and the Reformation, p.231.
14. Inst. II*B*,ii,21. -- dicit Ioannes in sua canonica-  
III,iii,23. -- quos Ioannes in sua canonica  
affirmat --.
15. No weight can be attached to Pannier's argument on the phrase "épistres qu'on a accoustumé d'appeler canoniques", (op.cit.p.113), when it is realized that the title "the Seven Canonical Epistles" was regularly applied to the Catholic

Epistles. Warfield, (op.cit.p.230), gives a comprehensive note on this point.

16. Leipoldt, Geschichte des N.T.Kanons, II, p.48.
17. Warfield, op.cit.p.230, shows that Calvin uses the Book of Revelation as Scripture and alongside other Scripture.
18. Reuss, op.cit.p.318.
19. Pannier, op.cit.p.116. Calvin "a applique reellement, sans crainte et avec succes, les principes de l'institution, en admettant dans ses Commentaires l'autorite des livres de la Bible d'apres le temoignage interieur du S. Esprit".  
Leipoldt, op.cit.p.148. We obtain the impression that it is only for form's sake that Calvin undertakes to test whether the **disputed books are canonical** or not. In reality it is always a settled matter with him that they are. Calvin feels himself, therefore, in the matter of the N.T.Canon, bound to the mediaeval tradition.  
Warfield, op.cit.p.154. "His acceptance of the Canon was therefore not a blind but a critically mediated acceptance. Therefore he discarded the Apocrypha; and if he accepted the Antilegomena it was because they commended themselves to his historico-critical judgement as holding a right place in the Canon."
20. Inst.I, vii, 1.
21. Ibid. -- Atqui si ita est, quid miseris conscientiis fiet, solidam vitae aeternae securitatem quaerentibus si quaecunque exstant de ea promissiones, solo hominum iudicio fultae, consistent? --- Rursum quibus impiorum sannis **sibiicitur** fides nostra, quantam apud omnes in suspicionem vocatur, si credatur hominum beneficio, non secus ac precariam habere auctoritatem?
22. Inst.I, vii, 2.
23. Inst. I, vii, 4. -- ab arcano testimonio Spiritus.
24. Inst. I, vii, 5.
25. Pannier, op.cit.p.112. "Il est intéressant de prendre pour ainsi dire sur le fait, dans le principe même des Commentaires, Calvin appliquant

sa propre doctrine à la formation ou plutôt à la confirmation du canon biblique, jugeant telle livre contesté, comme telle passage obscur, à la lumière du S.Esprit".

26. Inst. I,vii,2.
27. Inst. I,vii,3.
28. Inst. I,viii,12.
29. Opera IX,p.413. "Of their admitting all the books promiscuously into the Canon,I say nothing more than that it is done against the consent of the primitive Church".
30. See note 12,Ch.III.
31. Ibid.
32. Opera LV,p.5,(Hebrews). "Not only various opinions were formerly entertained as to the author of this Epistle,but it was only at a late date that it was received by the Latin Churches".  
Opera LV,p.381,(James). "It appears from the writings of Jerome and Eusebius that this Epistle was not received by many Churches without opposition".  
Opera LV,p.441,(2 Peter). "-- the doubts respecting this Epistle mentioned by Eusebius ought not to keep us from reading it".  
Opera LV,p.485,(Jude). "--there was some dispute among the ancients respecting this Epistle".
33. Pannier,op.cit.p.114.
34. Opera LV,p.485. Quia tamen utilis est lectu, nec quidquam a doctrinae apostolicae puritate alienum continet,iamque olim apud optimos quosque autoritatem abtinuit,eam libenter aliis adnumero.
35. Opera LV,p.381.
36. Opera LV.p.5. Nullus enim est ex sacris libris qui de sacerdotio tam luculente disserat,unici quod morte sui obtulit sacrificii vim dignitatemque tam magnifice extollat,de caeremoniarum tam usu quam abrogatione uberius tractet: qui denique plenius explicet Christum esse finem legis.

37. Opera LV,p.441.
38. Ibid. Interim omnium consensu,adeo nihil habet Petro indignum,ut vim spiritus apostolici et gratiam ubique exprimat.
39. Ibid.
40. Opera IX,p.413.
41. Opera LV,p.381. Quod autem parciore in praedicanda Christi gratia videtur,quam apostolo conveniat: certe non est ab omnibus exigendum ut idem argumentum tractent.  
Calvin goes on to point out that there is a great difference between the writings of Solomon and David; yet they are both accepted.
42. Opera LV,p.5. Quis porro eam composuerit,non magnopere curandum est.
43. Pannier op.cit.
44. Leipoldt op.cit.
45. Warfield op.cit.
46. Davies,The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers p.143.
47. Ibid.
48. Inst. I,vii,2.
49. K.Barth,Dogmatik II.Eng.Trans.p.120.
50. Inst. II,viii,13.
51. Inst. II,viii,12.
52. Opera XXIII,p.6. Moses "does not transmit to memory things before unheard of,but for the first time consigns to writing facts which the fathers had delivered from hand to hand, through a long succession of years,to their children".
53. Opera XXXVI,p.24.
54. Opera LV,p.441. Calvin holds that this epistle contains the teaching of Peter: "non quod eam scripserit ipse,sed quod unus aliquis ex



discipulis, ipsius mandato complexus fuerit  
quae temporum necessitas exigebat".

55. Opera I, p.162.
56. Opera XLIX, p.1. --- quod, si quis veram eius  
intelligentiam sit assequutus, ad reconditissimos  
quosque scripturae thesauros adeundos habeat  
aperatas fores.
57. Opera LV, p.381.
58. Inst. I, vii, 4. -- Spiritus, qui per os  
Prophetarum locutus esse, --.
59. Inst. IV, viii, 3. Sancta vero et pura illis  
labia fuerunt, quum Spiritus sancti coeperunt  
esse organa.  
Opera LV, p.458. Peter describes the sacred  
writers as moved by the Spirit because  
"obedienter sequuti sint spiritum ducem, qui  
in ipsorum ore, tanquam in suo sacrario,  
regnabat".
60. Cf. Inst. I, v, 13.
61. Opera LV, p.381. Et tamen omnes peraeque  
exosculamur.
62. Inst. IV, xi, 1.
63. Inst. II, x, 2. Patrum omnium foedus adeo  
substantia et re ipsa nihil a nostro differt,  
ut unum prorsus atque idem sit: administratio  
tamen variat.
64. Inst. II, xi, 4.
65. Inst. II, vi, 4. Hinc palam fieri quod nuper  
diximus, salvificam Dei cognitionem absque  
Christo non constare: ideoque ab exordio mundi  
ipsum fuisse propositum omnibus electis, in  
quem respicerent, et in quo acquiesceret eorum  
fiducia.
66. Inst. II, xi, 10.
67. Inst. II, ix, 4. Sed non ita successit Evangelium  
toti Lēgi, ut diversam rationem salutis afferret;  
quin potius ut sanciret ratumque esse probaret  
quicquid illa promiserat, ut corpus umbris  
adiungeret.

68. Deut. 10:15.
69. Colossians 3:11.
70. Inst. II,xi,13. Ergo in eo elucet Dei constantia, quod eandem omnibus saeculis doctrinam tradidit: quem ab initio praecepit nominis sui cultum, in eo requirendo perseverat.
71. Inst. I,vii,2. Quod autem rogant, Unde persuadebimur a Deo fluxisse, nisi ad ecclesiae decretum confugiamus? perinde est ac si quis roget, Unde discemus lucem discernere a tenebris, album a nigro, suave ab amaro? non enim obscuriorem veritatis suae sensum ultro Scriptura prae se fert, quam coloris sui res albae ac nigrae: saporis, suaves et amarae.
72. Inst. I,viii,13. Quare tum vere demum ad salvificam Dei cognitionem Scriptura satisfaciet, ubi interiori Spiritus sancti persuasionem fundata fuerit eius certitudo.
73. Inst. I,vii,5.
74. Inst. I,vii,1.
75. Opera LII, p. 383. --- quod scimus Deum nobis loquutum esse, certoque persuasi simus, non ex suo sensu loquutos ~~esse~~ prophetas, sed ut erant spiritus sancti organa, tantum protulisse quae coelitus mandata fuerant. Cf. Opera IV, p. 219.
76. Inst. I,vi,2. Sic autem habendum est, ut nobis affulgeat vera religio, exordium a coelesti doctrina fieri debere, nec quenquam posse vel minimum gustum rectae sanaeque doctrinae percipere, nisi qui Scripturae fuerit discipulus.
77. Inst. I,xiv,1. and I,vi,1.
78. Inst. III,xxi,3.
79. Inst. III,xxiv,4.
80. These were the Roman Catholics who held that the "holy mother Church" alone had been given the power to determine "the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures", (Opera VII, p. 409), and the Anabaptists. (See Doumergue, Jean Calvin, IV, p. 80).

81. Inst. I,vi,1.
82. Opera LV,p.457.
83. Opera LIII,p.653. Cependant nous voyons que l'Escriture sainte est fort simple,qu'il semble que ce soit une doctrine seulement pour les idiots:
84. Richardson,Preface to Bible Study,pp.1-2.
85. Opera XXIII,p.36. " 'In Eden': That Jerome improperly translates this,'from the beginning', is obvious:". See also Calvin's numerous citations of other faulty translations in the Vulgate, Opera LX pp.414-416.
86. Opera LV,p.105. (Heb.9:1)."Some copies read, the first tabernacle,but I suspect that there is a mistake in the word "tabernacle"; nor do I doubt but that some unlearned reader,not finding a noun to the adjective,and in his ignorance applying to the tabernacle what had been said of the covenant unwisely added the word.
87. Opera XLVII,p.188.
88. Opera XLVIII,p.138. (Acts 7:16). Ego quod pro certo asseram non habeo,nisi quod vel synecdochica est loquutio: vel quod Lucas non tam ex Mose quam ex veteri fama hoc retulit.
89. Opera XLV,p.85.(Matt.2:6). Micah has described Bethlehem as "little",but Matthew,in quoting this passage,alters it to "by no means the least". Calvin comments,"I rather agree with those who think that Matthew intended,by this change of language,to magnify the grace of God in making an inconsiderable and unknown town the birthplace of the highest king".
90. Opera XLV,p.782,and p.133. "-- it is not the intention of the Evangelists to arrange the history in such a manner as to preserve,on all occasions,the exact order of time,but to draw up an abridged narrative of the events so as to present,as in a mirror or picture,those things which are most necessary to be known concerning Christ".

91. Opera XLV,p.749.(Matt.27:9). "How the name Jeremiah crept in I confess I do not know,nor do I give myself much trouble to inquire. The passage itself plainly shows that the name of Jeremiah has been put down by mistake instead of Zechariah".
92. Opera LI,p.164.(Eph.2:5). "Whether the words 'by grace ye are saved' have been inserted by another hand I know not; But as they are perfectly agreeable to the context I am quite willing to receive them as written by Paul". Cf.Opera LV,p.365.(i John 5:7).
93. Opera LV,p.105. (Heb.9:1). "I indeed wonder that the mistake has so prevailed that it is found in the Greek copies almost universally. But necessity constrains me to follow the ancient reading".
94. Opera LV,p.417. (James 4:7). "Many copies introduced the following sentence:---.Erasmus suspects that it was first a note in the margin and afterwards crept into the text. ---. But I rather conjecture that this sentence,which accords with the common doctrine of Scripture, had become then a sort of proverbial saying among the Jews".
95. Opera XLVII,p.188.
96. Inst.IV,ix,8. -- nihil enim continent quam puram et nativam Scripturae interpretationem --.
97. Inst. IV,xi,1. Afferam interpretationem non argutam,non coactam,non detortam: sed germanam, fluentem,obviam.
98. Inst. IV,ix,13. -- vera et certa Scripturae interpretatio --.
99. Opera L,p.237. Sciamus ergo eum esse verum scripturae sensum qui germanus est ac simplex;.
100. Opera X,p.403. Et sane,quum hoc sit prope unicum illius officium mentem scriptoris quem explicandum sumpsit patefacere,---.
101. See Opera XXXII,p.136-7.
102. Inst. IV,xvii,20.
103. Inst. IV,xvii,21. Dico metonymicum esse hunc



sermonem, quia usitatus est passim in Scriptura,  
ubi de mysteriis agitur.

104. Opera XXIII, p. 89. Primo verbum *ἡνῶ* tantundem  
valet atque acceptio, opponiturque reiectioni.  
Deinde quando de re subiecta habetur sermo, de  
sacrificiis dictum interpretor, quod Deus illa  
suscipiet ubi rite oblata fuerint.
105. Inst. IV, xvii, 22.
106. Opera XLV, p. 182. Cf. Inst. II, viii, 26.
107. Inst. II, xvii, 6.
108. Opera XLIX, p. 37.
109. Opera LI, p. 166.
110. Inst. IV, xvi, 23. Quando quidem multae in  
Scriptura sententiae habentur, quarum intelligentia  
a loci circumstantia pendeat.
111. Opera XXXII, p. 60.
112. Opera XXXII, p. 61-2.
113. Opera XXIV, p. 8.
114. Opera XLV, p. 539.
115. Inst. IV, xiii, 13.
116. Inst. II, vii, 2.
117. Opera LV, p. 430.
118. Opera XLIX, p. 475+6.
119. Inst. IV, x, 30.
120. Opera XLIX, p. 535.
121. Inst. IV, xi, 1.
122. Inst. I, xiv, 4.
123. Inst. IV, xvii, 32.
124. Opera LII, p. 382. Proinde non immerito nos ad  
fidem Christi revocat, tanquam ad scopum atque  
adeo summam.

125. Inst. III,iv,35.
126. Inst. III,xx,15. -singularibus exemplis non  
aboleri perpetuam legem.
127. Inst. III,xvii,11.Spiritum secum non pugnare,  
certum est.
128. Opera XLV,p.2.
129. Inst. II,ix,2.
130. Inst. II,xi,2. -- adumbratas -.  
Inst. II,ix,4. -- corpus umbris adiungeret.
131. Inst. IV,viii,5.
132. Inst. II,vii,2.
133. Inst. IV,xvi,3.
134. Inst. IV,xiv,18. Opera XLIX,pp.451-6.
135. Inst. IV,xiv,20.
136. Inst. IV,xiv,26.
137. Opera XLIX,p.452.
138. Inst. II,xi,6. Nam et obscura,ceu de rebus  
longinquis et typis inclusa est eorum  
praedicatio.  
Inst. II,x,20. Dei Monitatem quo melius
139. Prophetarum commendarent,temporariis beneficiis,  
velut lineamentis quibusdam,populo  
adumbrasse.
139. Inst. II,xi,6.
140. Inst. II,xiii,3.
141. Opera L,p.236.
142. Ibid.
143. Opera XLIX,p.441.
144. Opera L,p.166. Circa finem capitis pulchra  
allegoria suam disputationem exornat.
145. Opera L,p.237.

146. Opera L,p.237.
147. Ibid.
148. Opera L,p.236.
149. Inst. II,v,19.
150. Inst. II,vii,2. -- nihil et inanes esse ceremonias donec ad Christum ventum fuerit.
151. Opera XLIX,p.196.
152. Opera LV,p.98. Commenting on Hebrews 8:5, Calvin says that the Apostle proves "that the whole service according to the Law was nothing more than a picture, as it were, designed to show forth what is found spiritually in Christ. God commanded that all parts of the tabernacle should correspond with the original pattern which had been shown to Moses on the Mount. And if the form of the tabernacle had reference to something else, then the same must have been the case as to the rituals and priesthood; it hence follows that there was nothing real in them". This type of reasoning could lead to the most extensive allegorizing; but Calvin proceeds to place his limits on the method.
153. Opera LV,p.99.
154. Ibid.
155. Ibid.
156. Opera XLIX,pp.452-3.
157. Fullerton, Prophecy and Authority, p.146, comments: "Calvin's method of reconciling his dogmatic theory and his exegesis is a pure guess and a pretty lame one at that".
158. Inst. II,xiy,7.
159. Dakin, Calvinism, p.202.
160. Opera XLVII,p.214-5. "Thus the ancient people beheld Christ at a distance, as he had promised to them, and yet were not permitted to behold him present, as he made himself familiarly and completely visible, when he came down from heaven to men." Cf. Opera XLV, p.362-3.

161. Opera LV,p.216.
162. Inst. II,viii,6.
163. Inst. II,viii,8. Sane adeo in omnibus fere  
praeceptis manifestae sunt synecdochae,ut  
deridiculo<sup>ture</sup>/sift futurus,qui Legis sensum ad  
verborum angustias restringere velit.
164. Ibid.
165. Inst. I,xiii,1.
166. Inst. I,xiv,8. pro ingenii nostri modulo --.
167. Inst. II,xvi,2. Huius generis loquutiones ad  
sensum nostrum sunt accommodatae ---.
168. Opera XLV,p. 514. "-- our Lord employs the  
ordinary forms of expression,-- he  
accommodates his modes of expression to what  
is known and customary."
169. Inst. IV,viii,15. -- quod pro temporis sui  
ratione loquens Christus ---.
170. Inst. IV,xiv,3.
171. Opera XXIII,p.17. -- sed receptae<sup>e</sup> consuetudini  
accommodavit sermonem suum.
172. Opera XXIII,p.22.
173. Opera XXIII,p.21. Tendendum est illud,Mosen  
non acute philosophari de occultis mysteriis:  
sed referre quae passim rudibus nota sunt,et  
posita in vulgari usu.
174. Ibid.
175. Opera XXIII,p.22.
176. Ibid.
177. Opera XXIII,p.23.
178. Opera XXIII,p.22. Nos enim potius respexit  
quam sidera,ut theologum decebat.
179. Ibid.
180. Inst. I,xiv,2. Denique meminerimus,Deum --,  
Mosis historiam speculi loco nobis proponere,



in quo viva eius effigies relucet.

Inst. I,xiv,2. --- Mosen certum unius Dei creatoris testem ac praeconem fuisse.

181. Opera LV,p.25.
182. Opera XLV,p.84.
183. Opera XLII,p.432.
184. Opera XLV,p.98. Neque tamen a Matthaeo torquetur sed scitè aptatur ad praesentem causam --.
185. Opera XLIX,p.340. The Editor of the English translation points out a mistake on Calvin's part here,as the LXX corresponds to the Hebrew in this case.
186. Opera XXXVII,p.40.
187. Opera XLIX,p.340.
188. Opera XLIX,p.341.
189. Fullerton,op.cit.ch.7,equates the Reformation principle of exegesis with the grammatico-historical principle.
190. Cunliffe Jones,The Authority of the Biblical Revelation,p.59, traces the development of historical exegesis back to St.Thomas.
190. Opera XLIX,p.1.
191. Inst. II,vii,14. Manet igitur per Christum inviolabilis Legis doctrina --.
192. Opera LV,p.217. Interea haec eximia est doctrinae eorum laus,dum vocatur spiritus sancti testimonium, Nam quamvis homines praecones ac ministri,ille tamen autor fuit.
193. Inst. IV,viii,14. -- perfectam Evangelii doctrinae cognitionem ---.
194. Inst. I,vii,4. -- manifesta signa loquentis Dei conspici in Scriptura,ex quibus pateat coelestem esse eius doctrinam.  
Calvin uses various terms in referring to the doctrine which is contained in Scripture:  
Inst. III,xv,4. -- contra Scripturae doctrinam.  
Inst. III,xi,8. -- in doctrina,qua Christus cognoscitur.

- Inst. III,xiv,15. -- Christi doctrinam --.  
 IV,ii,3. -- Evangelii doctrinam --.  
 IV,viii,9. -- spirituali doctrina --.  
 IV,i,5. -- coelesis doctrinae --.  
 -- sacra Dei doctrina.  
Opera IV,p.277. -- acceptam a Deo doctrinam.
195. Inst. IV,xi,1.
196. Inst. III,iii,22.
197. Inst. IV,xii,1. Poinde quemadmodum salvifica Christi doctrina anima est ecclesiae --.
198. Inst. IV,xvi,31.
199. Inst. IV,xvii,19. Certe quod docemus,Scripturis optime per omnia convenit.
200. Inst. III,iii,20. -- ita mihi cum Scripturae veritate optime consentire visa est.
201. Opera XLVIII,p.359.
202. Inst. III,xvi,3.
203. Inst. I,xiii,3.
204. Inst. III,xiv,17.
205. Inst. III,xv,4.
206. Inst. III,xi,3.
207. Inst. III,xix,1. -- summam Evangelicae doctrinae compendio complecti propositum sit.
208. Opera II,pp.3-4.
209. Temple,Nature,Man,and God, p.316.
210. Sassaure,Revelation and Inspiration: Article translated in the Evangelical Quarterly, Jan.1949,pp.3 and 5.
211. Warfield,op.cit.p.234,note 34.
212. Davies,op.cit.p.114.
213. Ibid p.116.
214. Pannier,op.cit.p.200.

215. Doumergue, op.cit.p.76.
216. op.cit.p.116.
217. Ibid.
218. K.Barth, Nein, Eng.Trans. Natural Theology, p.101.
219. Inst. I, vii, 1.
220. Warfield, op.cit.p.237, quotes J.Cramer as follows:  
"How Calvin conceives of this dictare by the Holy Ghost is difficult to say. He borrowed it from the current ecclesiastical usage, which employed it of the auctor primarius of Scripture, as indeed also of tradition. Thus the Council of Trent uses the expression dictante Spiritu Sancto of the unwritten tradition inspired by the Holy Spirit."  
Calvin uses the term in certain cases with a definite indication that it is to be regarded as metaphorical. e.g. Opera XXIX, p.632, -- verba quodammodo dictante Christi Spiritu--; and Inst. IV, xiii, 2, -- Deum --, quasi ex verbo suo dictantem --.
221. Opera XLIX, p.340.
222. Inst. IV, viii, 6.
223. Cramer holds that "it is true that Calvin gave the impulse (from which the later dogmatic view of Scripture grew) more than any other of the Reformers". Warfield, op.cit.p.234.
224. Fullerton, op.cit.p.148, points out that Calvin regarded the prophecies in Isaiah 9:1-7, and chapters 40ff., as referring primarily to the Babylonian exile, and adds: "The inference which Criticism was to draw from this observation was ultimately inevitable".
225. Hunter, op.cit.p.72.
226. Dodd, The Authority of the Bible, p.295.
227. Cf. Luther's controversy with Zwingli at Marburg in 1529 when he so vehemently insisted upon the absolute and literal authority of the words "This is my Body". Cf. Grisar, op.cit.pp.381-2.

## Chapter IV.

1. Summa Theologica Bk.II,Part I,Q.3,Art.5 and 8.
2. Ibid Q.5,Art.8.
3. Ibid Q.5,Art.1,and Q.62,Art.1.
4. Religion and Revelation p.79.
5. See Lindsay,History of the Reformation,Vol.I,p.203.  
Staupitz explained to Luther that,"God had promised that man could have fellowship with Him; all fellowship is founded on personal trust; and trust,the personal trust of the believing man on a personal God who has promised,gives man that fellowship with God through which all things that belong to God can become his.--"  
"These thoughts,acted upon,helped Luther gradually to win his way to peace,---. In the end,the vision of the true relation of the believing man to God came to him suddenly with all the force of a personal revelation,and the storm-tossed soul was at rest."
6. Inst. III,ii,14.
7. Opera XLVII,p.1+2.
8. Opera XLVII,p.1. "-- for,as Word is said to be among men the image of the mind,so it is not inappropriate to apply this to God,and to say that He reveals himself to us by his Word".  
It is apparent that the mere structure of the phrase,the Word of God,indicates that there is an anthropological analogy implied in it. It means that God speaks,and that that act is analogically parallel to the act that takes place when man speaks. This is,of course,merely the beginning of an understanding of what the phrase represents; but it is a necessary and natural beginning. There are many restrictions to be placed upon the analogy. Thus Calvin notes the difference "between God's speech and the empty sounds that proceed from the mouths of men". Such distinctions,however,presuppose the elementary and essentially true,analogical nature of the phrase. Even Barth is unable to dispense with analogy. Although he claims that,"no sort of anthropology,even only in appearance,must be allowed to come forward



as a basis for understanding the Word of God", (Dogmatik I,i,Eng.Trans.p.148),yet he declares that God's Word is God's language and that the concept is analogical. "The form in which reason communicates with reason, person with person, is language, so too when it is God's language". (p.152). When God speaks it is an inconceivable event; but it is an event which is understood "primarily in analogy with what happens in the spiritual sphere of creation". (p.153).

9. Inst. I,xiii,7."-- all divine revelations are justly entitled the Word of God ---".
10. Opera XLVII,p.1. Cf.Opera XLVII,p.3.
11. Opera XLVII,p.1. "-- whenever God grants any tokens
12. Opera XXIII,p.16. At longe aliter de sermone Dei sentiendum est,nempe sapientiam esse in Deo residentem,et sine qua Deus nunquam esse potuit. Cf.Opera,XLVII,p.2.
13. Inst. IV,xix,8. Cf. Opera,XXXII,p.253. Opera XXXVII,p.661. "-- his majesty which shines forth in his Word ---".
14. Opera LV... ,p.474. Semper enim hoc reputandum est,mundum non alia virtute proprie consistere quam verbi Dei: ac proinde inferiores causas inde vim suam mutari: et prout aguntur,habere diversos affectus.
15. Opera XXXVII,p.480.
16. Opera XLV,p.236.
17. Inst. II,xi,11.
18. Inst. III,xxiv,8.
19. The Word of God and the Word of Man,p.101.
20. Cf.Ker,History of Preaching,Lectures VIII and IX.
21. Inst. I,vi,2.
22. Opera LIII,pp.384-5.
23. Inst. IV,iii,11 and 15.

24. Inst. IV,iii,2.
25. Eng.Trans. The Word of God,pp.98-111.
26. Opera XLV,p.16.
27. Opera XLVIII,p.177.
28. Ibid.
29. Cf.Opera XLVIII,pp.259,282.
30. Inst. III,iv,22.
31. Inst. IV,xi,1.
32. Inst. IV,i,6.
33. Quoted from Parker,The Oracles of God,p.47.
34. Ibid.p.49.
35. Inst. IV,i,6.
36. Inst. IV,viii,5.
37. Inst. IV,viii,6.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Inst. IV,viii,7. -- ab uno omnem salutis doctrinam petere iuberet: ab uno pendere,in uno haerere: denique (quod verba sonant) unius voci auscultare.
41. Ibid. Et sane quid iam ab homine aut expectare aut expeti debeat,ubi Verbum ipsum vitae familiariter se nobis ac coram explicavit?
42. Inst. IV,viii,8.
43. Ibid.
44. Warfield,op.cit.p.159. Cf.Davies,op.cit.p.109. "-- the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as we know them constitute the Word of God."
45. The Word of God,p.126.
46. Ibid. pp.131-2.

47. Inst. I,ix,1.
48. Inst. IV,x,17.
49. Opera XXXIX,p.555. cf.Opera XXXII,p.288;  
XXXVI,pp.56,656; XLVII,p.385; XLVIII,pp.176,313.  
Opera LII,p.412. " 'The faithful word' is the  
appellation he gives to the doctrine which is  
pure,and which has proceeded from the mouth of  
God".
50. Inst. III,ii,31; II,i,4. Cf. Opera XXXII,pp.219,  
259,274; XXXVI,pp.38,121.
51. Opera XXXII,pp.226,231,235,284; XXXI,pp.128,185.
52. Inst. III,ii,7. More specifically the Word of  
grace is the Gospel. Opera XLVIII,p.319.  
Meminerimus ergo in hunc finem Deum in  
evangelio nobis loqui,ut se nobis reconciliet,  
ac propitium esse testetur.
53. Opera.XLVII,p.447. Cf.Opera XLVIII,p.319.
54. See p.160ff.
55. Opera XXXVII,p.624. Cf.Opera XXXVIII,p.323.
56. Opera LII,p.85. Neque enim Deum vere Christus  
repraesentaret,nisi verbum esset Dei **essentiale**:
57. Opera XLVII,p.3. Calvin condemns the "barbarous  
tyranny" of the "theologians of the Sorbonne,who  
teased and stormed at Erasmus in such a manner  
because he had changed a single word for the  
better". In the first edition of the New  
Testament,1516,Erasmus used verbum ; but in  
the following editions used sermo. In his  
Annotations to the 1535 edition he writes,  
"I wonder why verbum pleased the Latins more  
than sermo". He admits that verbum was used  
in his first edition,and declares that it was  
retained because of some superstitious  
reverence,(superstitioso quodam metu). But  
sermo expresses the Greek meaning much more  
exactly and appropriately than verbum. He  
holds that verbum refers to a single saying,  
whereas sermo has reference to a complete  
speech.(pp.218-9).
58. Inst. I,xiii,11.
59. Inst. IV,xvii,26.
60. Inst. I,xiii,7.

61. Opera XLVII,p.4. Huc autem spectat evangelistae consilium (sicut dixi),quod statim ab ipsa mundi creatione sermo Dei in externum actum prodierit. Nam quum in sua essentia prius esset incomprehensibilis,tunc eius vis effectum palam fuit cognita.
62. Opera XXXI,p.327.
63. Opera XLIX,pp.152-3.
64. Opera XLV,p.465. When Christ confounds the Pharisees and the Sadducees, (Matt.16:3), Calvin comments that "it is an argument which Christ founds on the regular course of nature".
65. Opera XXXII,p.431. Itaque nisi velimus praepostere in operibus Dei philosophari,semper ab hoc principio incipere convenit,singulae mundi partes ad Dei arbitrium intentas esse,ut totus naturae cursus nihil aliud sit quam prompta eorum quae mandavit exequutio.
66. Opera XLVII,p.5. Nisi enim continua eius inspiratio mundum vegetat,necesse erit quaecunque vigent,protinus decidere aut in nihilum redigi.
67. Ibid.
68. Opera XLVII,p.7.
69. Opera LV,p.301. Cf.Inst. I,xiii,9. -- Christum esse illum Sermonem carne indutum --.
70. Opera LII,p.104. Deum enim habent vere praesentem,ipsoque penitus fruuntur qui Christum possident.
71. Ibid. Summa est,quod Deus in Christo se nobis ~~in~~ plene atque in solidum exhibuerit.---  
In Christo autem essentialiter nobis apparuit.
72. Opera LV,p.375. Cf. Opera XLVII,p.16-171.
73. Opera XXXI,p.185.
74. Opera LII,p.406-7.
75. Cf.Notes 56 and 60.Ch.IV.
76. Inst. I,xiii,7.



77. Opera LII,p.407.
78. Inst. I,viii,13.  
Parker,op.cit.p.52,sums up Calvin's attitude to preaching thus: "Therefore the preacher may be assured that God will,as it pleases Him,give His Holy Spirit to the words spoken,to make them His Word. But he can never take for granted the presence of the Spirit,who is given of God's free goodness and grace".
79. Inst. III,ii,9.
80. Opera LV,p.231. Atqui nulla erit fides,nisi verbum destinari nobis sciamus.
81. Opera LII,p.151.
82. Inst. III,vi,4. Non enim linguae est doctrina sed vitae: nec intellectu memoriaque duntaxat apprehenditur,ut reliquae disciplinae,sed tum recipitur demum,ubi animam totam possidet,sedemque et receptaculum invenit in intimo cordis affectu.
83. Cf. Note 6.Ch.IV.
84. Inst. III,ii,8.
85. Inst. III,ii,12. Cf.Inst.III,xx,1.
86. Inst. IV,xvii,8.
87. Ibid.
88. Inst. IV,xvii,1.
89. Opera L,p.222.
90. Inst. III,i,3.
91. Inst. IV,xvii,6.
92. Warfield and Davies as quoted p.145 and Note 44.
93. Opera XXXII,p.139.
94. Opera XXXII,p.140.
95. Inst. III,iv,18. Cf. Opera XL,p.444.

96. Cf. Opera XXXVIII, p. 444. Inst. IV, xiv, 16.
97. Opera XLV, p. 364. Est ergo semper evangelium potentia fructosum semen, sed non actu.
98. Opera LV, p. 49.
99. Opera LV, p. 50.
100. Opera LV, p. 50.
101. Opera XXXVI, p. 649.
102. Opera XXXVI, p. 650.
103. Opera LV, pp. 475-6.
104. Inst. IV, xiv, 3.
105. Inst. III, ii, 9.
106. See Ch. II, pp. 70-71.
107. Inst. IV, xvii, 5.
108. Inst. IV, xiv, 15.
109. Ibid.
110. Inst. IV, xiv, 16.
111. Inst. IV, xiv, 15.
112. Inst. IV, xiv, 16.
113. Inst. IV, xvii, 12.
114. Ibid.
115. Inst. IV, xvii, 14.
116. Inst. IV, xvii, 18.
117. Ibid.
118. Inst. IV, xvii, 3. Cf. Inst. IV, xvii, 10.
119. Inst. IV, xvii, 9.
120. Inst. IV, xvii, 7.

121. Inst. IV,xvii,32.
122. Inst. IV.xvii,21.
123. Opera XLVII,p.1.
124. Inst. IV,xvii,21.
125. Ibid.
126. Inst. IV,xiv,5.
127. Inst. IV,xiv,17.
128. Inst. IV,xvii,28.
129. Cf. Inst. IV,xiv,17.
130. Inst. IV,xvii,26. doctrinam -- ex puro Dei verbo sumptam esse eiusque auctoritati inniti:
131. Buber,I and Thou,Eng.Trans.p.46.

#### Chapter V.

1. Rees,The Holy Spirit in Thought and Experience, p.176."Aquinas treats the whole subject of revelation without referring to the Spirit".
2. Grisar,Luther,Eng.Trans. Vol.IV,p.391.
3. Jackson,Huldreich Zwingli,p.371.
4. Dakin,Calvinism,p.197. Cf. Doumergue,Jean Calvin, Vol.IV,p.56.
5. Opera I,p.104. Alii scribunt: Si fides per sacramenta augeatur,frustra datum esse spiritum sanctum,cuius virtus atque opus est,inchoare,tueri,consummare fidem. Quibus equidem fateor, proprium ac solidum spiritus sancti opus fidem esse,a quo illuminati Deum ac benignitatis eius thesauros agnoscimus,et sine cuius lumene mens nostra adeo caeca est ut nihil conspicerem,adeo stupida,ut nihil subodorari rerum spiritualium possit.

6. Doumergue, op.cit.p.57.  
 Mais de 1536 à 1539 s'écoulaient des années de lutte, tout particulièrement contre les anabaptistes, avec lesquels Calvin discute publiquement le 18 mars 1537. Les anabaptistes se dressent en face de l'Eglise naissante, aussi dangereux que les romanistes. Et Calvin doit combattre désormais avec la même vivacité, à droite, le péril anti-protestant, à gauche, le péril ultra-protestant, moins contradictoires en réalité qu'en apparence. En tous cas, contre les deux, Calvin va faire un effort immense pour assurer plus profondément la base vraie du protestantisme, la seule sur laquelle il puisse s'appuyer assez solidement pour résister à tous, l'autorité de la Bible. En 1539 donc, la théorie de Calvin apparaît, on peut presque dire: entièrement nouvelle et entièrement achevée, avec ses deux faces, l'une tournée contre les romanistes, l'autre tournée contre les anabaptistes, et leur "intempérance phrénétique".
7. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience, p.5.
8. Inst. III,iii,14.
9. Inst. I,xiii,2.
10. Inst. I,xiii,18.
11. Inst. III,vii,1.
12. Inst. III,iii,14.
13. Inst. I,ix,2.
14. Opera LV, pp.347-348.
15. Opera LV, p 348.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Camfield, Revelation and the Holy Spirit, p.88.
19. Robinson, The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit, p.182.
20. Inst. I,vii,5.



21. Wernle, Der Evangelische Glaube, p.49.  
"Denknotwendigkeit".
22. Lecerf, An Introduction to Reformed Dogmatics,  
Eng. Trans. ph.9.
23. Dakin, op.cit.p.202.

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